





W O M A N
I S A
R I D D L E.
A
C O M E D Y.

As it is ACTED at the
Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

By Mr. C H R I S T O P H E R B U L L O C K.

—Varium & Mutabile semper Fæmina.
Virg.

*For 'tis in vain to think to guess
At Woman by Appearances.*

Hud.

The SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.XXIX.

A M O V
A D I
A D D P
Y G H M O C



1775. b. 13



done to you by me to find it to be
done by my self alone and not by another.

To the Most NOBLE

P H I L I P,

Marquis of Wharton and Catherlagh,

Earl of WHARTON and RATHFARNAM,

Viscount WINCHEADON,

And Baron of Wharton and Trim.

My LORD,



THE Permission of this Address to
Your Lordship, from so young
an Author, and one of so mean
a Rank, is an Honour I could
only have expected from Your
Lordship's Condescension and Good Nature.

TITLES cannot so well distinguish a NO-
BLEMAN, as a Propensity to Great Actions;

DEDICATION.

and Great Actions ever shew themselves to best Advantage, from the Objects on which employ'd; and that it is peculiar to Your Lordship's Character, that You set no greater a Value on the *Goods of Fortune*, than as they may be render'd conducive to the Happiness of that Part of Mankind, over which Providence has happily plac'd your Lordship; and can look down with a Face of Good Nature on the meanest Attempts, the Honour You have done me in taking this COMEDY under Your PATRONAGE, will demonstrate to the World.

I HAD no Desert by which to pretend to Your Lordship's Favour, but you first by Your Generosity embolden'd me to throw this Trifle at your Feet, and then indulg'd me in my Request, by an obliging Willingness of becoming my PATRON.

It were an Impudence in me to pretend to the Praise of Your Lordship's VIRTUES; and it is a Theme I doubt not will employ some Pens of the greatest Reputation; I shall rather choose to follow the Judicious Examples of that Great Painter, who wisely drew a Vail over those Beauties he was conscious he wanted Art to imitate, than to incur the Guilt of derogating from Your many and great Accomplishments, by my want of Skill to conduct me in such an Undertaking; so I shall

DEDICATION. vii

shall content my self, with silently admiring those Perfections in Your Lordship, which I freely own I have not a Capacity to describe: The Height of my Ambition is this Liberty of confessing my Obligations to Your Lordship, and of subscribing my self,

My L O R D,

*Your Lordship's much oblig'd,
and obedient humble Servant,*

CHRISTOPHER BULLOCK.

P R -



PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. ELRINGTON.

WIT and You Critics have, in ev'-
[ry Age,
Maintain'd hot Wars with still
unwearied Rage:
The Quarrel might, perhaps, be
grounded right,
And only False Wit did your Spleens excite:
Thus was your Anger just, and its Effect
Good Sence t'establish and bad Tastes correct:
But now you judge from Passion, not from
Reason;
All Wit's thought Factious, and all Satyr—
Treason.
To what sad End the Bard must rack his
Brain,
Whilst you'll first damn his Words, and then—
explain.
Action and Art are lost, when Censure's Sword
Is ready out, and certain Death's the Word.
Our Author for himself all Fears disclaims,
Since he alone at your Diversion aims;
And counts it Merit, if he can but move
His Pit by Laughter his poor Scenes t'approve;
But

PROLOGUE.

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But mourns the ungen'rous Jealousie of Spleen,
That wrests to vile Construction th' harmless
[Scene.

Be just at least, if you will not be kind,
Arraign us not for Things we ne'er design'd:
'Tis hard beneath a double Load to bow;
O be not Partial and Inve[r]ate too!—
Swoln with Success, and in Opinion high,
Our Rivals all our weak Efforts defie;
And laugh to see us toil and heave in vain,
Like Sisyphus, a Stone which backwards falls
[again.

Sure we are seated on Enchanted Ground.
And nought can prosper 'till the Charm's un-
[bound:

If Prejudice the fatal Magick be,
Your Smiles may loose that Charm, and set us
[free!

Let not those poor forsaken Benches show
Like Fairy Rings on which no Grass will grow:
Divide your Favours with an equal Hand,
We'll strive to prize 'em, tho' we can't com-
[mand.

If then our Stage your gen'rous Pity raise,
The less our Merit is, the more your Praise.

Dramatis

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Colonel Manly; a Gentleman of Fortune, } Mr. Leigh.
Charles Courtwell; a Younger Brother of a small Fortune, } Mr. Elrington.
Sir Amorous Vainwit; a Boasting Pedantick Fop of a large Estate, } Mr. Bullock Jun.
Mr. Vulture; an Old Rich Litigious Stock Jobber, } Mr. Bullock Sen.
Aspin; Servant to Colonel Manly, —— Mr. Spiller.
Butler; —— Mr. Ogden.
Servant; —— Mr. Eaton.

W O M E N.

Lady Outside; a Rich Young Widow, Mrs. Rogers.
Miranda; Courtwell's Sister, a } Mrs. Cross.
Young Lady of a good Fortune, }
Clarinda; a Gentlewoman of a good Family, debauch'd by Sir Amorous, } Mrs. Spiller.
Necessary; the Widow's Chamber-maid, } Mrs. Elsom.
Betty; Clarinda's Maid.

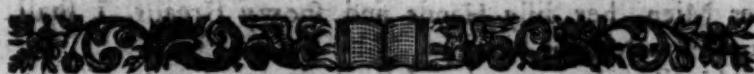
Chairmen.

S C E N E, L O N D O N.

Time of Action, from Four of the Clock in the Afternoon,
till Eleven at Night.



W O M A N I S A R I D D L E.



ACT I. SCENE a Chamber.

Enter Colonel Manly, and his Man Aspin. *The Colonel perusing a Letter.*

Col. Man.

HERE is something in the Adventure of this Lady so very unaccountable, (ev'n beyond the natural Extravagance of her Sex) that I am not able to guess what she designs, or what she shud be.

Aspin. Why, Sir, according to my shallow Understanding, her Design must be upon your Person; but what she is, I cannot possibly find out; but do firmly believe 'tis some Fairy or other, who has taken a Liking to you.—Why, you laugh now, Master, but upon my Soul I have not rested one Night in quiet since this Thought came into my Head.

Col. Man. Away with these foolish Chimæra's.

Asp.

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Aſp. Why, Sir, you are as unbelieving as a few.—I am certain I was not deceiv'd last Night; for peeping thro' the Key-hole of the Door, I saw this same Spirit that is in Love with you, and a hopeful Attendant with her; but I own I had not the Courage to go in and keep 'em Company.

Man. And cou'd not you see where they went out?

Aſp. See where they went out! Why, no doubt they vanish'd, according to their usual Custom; but let 'em go where they will, I'm sure I was so frighted, that as I stood at th' Top of the Stairs, my Fear let me tumble to the Bottom.

Man. It shall go very hard but I'll discover her.—It certainly must be she that I have met three or four times in the Park, the Stile of her Letters is so like the Discourse of that witty Creature—Well, if it be she, and the Beauty of her Face comes up to that of her Shape, her Mien, her lilly Hands and snowy Breasts, I shall run distracted for her.

Aſp. That's more than I shall do for her Ladyship's Attendant; besides I don't like this Correspondence with Fairies, my Conscience utterly disapproves of such diabolical Proceedings.

Man. Your Fear, you mean: You'll be very fit to follow me to a Camp if there shou'd be Occasion.

Aſp. O dear Sir, by no means. My Talent (I thank you) lies all to Civil Employment; I'll leave the Part of having ones Throat cut to such noble Gentlemen as you are—But for this Spirit, Sir, since you are so arm'd with Resolution, why don't you speak to it?

Man. Why, Sirrah, when I found a Letter upon my Table th' other Day, in which she commanded me to leave an Answer in the same Place, did not I watch a whole Day and Night to see her? And when I despair'd of her Appearance, and stept into the next Room for half a quarter of an Hour, was not my Letter gone at my Return?

Enter Courtwell.

Ha! *Charles Courtwell!* the very Man I was wishing for; I have the most whimsical Adventure to acquaint you with—

Court.

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Court. Colonel Manly, your Servant: Four o'Clock, and not yet drest? Why, 'tis a Miracle to meet with you at Home at this Hour.

Man. Faith I find so little good Company abroad, that there's no Temptation.

Court. But I presume, you have had some at Home that has kept you in your Bed so late.

Man. No faith, 'twas a Debauch that I made last Night, which kept me out of it till Seven this Morning: I have as many Qualms, as a young breeding Woman.

Court. O! you shou'd drive out one Debauch with another; you'll not be your self till you're warm with the same Sport: What say you, will you make one to a Bowl of Rack-Punch at Charing-Cross.

Man. No, faith, I can't approve of your Cure for a Drunken Sickness.

Court. If you are not dispos'd for Drinking, will you go to the Playhouse, there's a new Comedy to be acted to Night?

Man. I nauseate the Place; 'tis become worse of late than a Coffee-House: The Rage of Party is so Predominant, that ev'n publick Diversion is interrupted, and 'tis impossible to sit out a Play with any Satisfaction, for the ridiculous Comments which a Man is oblig'd to hear from the Politicians in the Pit.

Court. That is a publick Grievance indeed, and not to be redress'd, but by a general Consent of the Persons who frequent the Theatres, by resolving to go only for their Diversion, without the poor Satisfaction of indulging their Spleen.

Man. In short, the old Plays are so curtail'd for fear of giving Offence to Parties, that if *Shakespear*, *Fletcher*, and *Johnson* were alive, they'd hardly believe their Productions legitimate; and for New Plays, there can be none worth seeing, since the Viciousness of the Age has beat out Satyr's triple row of Teeth by a kind of general Consent.

Court. But I must tell you, I think you wrong the modern Bards; there are Fools expos'd in most of our new Plays.

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Man. Ay, I grant you they may be free with the Character of a Fool, for no Man will take that to himself; the greatest Coxcomb that ever was, believ'd himself a Wit; but for Knaves, who dare meddle with them in this Age. In short, the World is become so wicked, that 'tis almost Criminal to speak against Knavery, and you can hardly lash a Vice, without creating a potent Enemy.

Court. The mercenary Temper of the Poets has not a little conduc'd to the Prohibition of a Satyr.

Man. True; we have not a *Wycherly* now, no Plain-Dealer left in the Tribe, they drop the Design of Comedy, with the publick Good, for their private Interests; and Fear, or Gain, or both, make 'em rather countenance, than lash the Vices of the Age; they study nothing now, but to advance the Profits of the Third Day, so lard their Plays with Party Invectives, and by severely railing at one Side, get their abominable Stuff supported by the Interest of the other.

Court. Well, I perceive you are no ways dispos'd for any Diversion to Night, so I'll leave you to your Meditations.

Man. No, you shan't go yet.

Court. O, I had forgot; Prithee what's the Adventure you have to acquaint me with?

Man. I'll tell you — You must know I have an Invisible Mistress, a Thing of Air, that conjures it self thro' the Keyhole of my Door, leaves Letters for me upon the Table, and returns for their Answers.

Court. This is surprizing indeed.

Man. Faith 'tis true, tho' — I have left a Letter upon the Table in this very Room, lock'd the Door, taken the Key in my own Pocket, went out, return'd in half an Hour, my Letter has been gone, and another, by way of Reply, left in its Place. There's the last, prithee read it.

Court. (reads) Colonel, You are very importunate to know who I am, and by what Power I converse with you thus: Be satisfy'd, I am worth the knowing, but will not discover my self. Love is the Power by which I move, and I take a Pleasure in

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in puzzling them I have the greatest Value for.
Set Invention to work, for I am a Riddle, expound
me, and take me.

This is the most romantick Adventure I ever heard of.

Man. So you wou'd say indeed, did you know all —
She is acquainted with all my Affairs, even my most secret ;
nay, she has intimated her Knowledge of a Discourse
that happen'd only betwixt you and I, when you pro-
pos'd your Sister to me, and which you enjoin'd me par-
ticularly to keep a Secret : In these Affairs she is extra-
vagantly surprizing ; that damn'd impertinent Vice, Cu-
riosity, which ruin'd the first Woman, has fruitfully
spread itself thro' the whole Sex, to the Interruption of
many a charming Intrigue, and more particularly actuates
this little Fairy, this thing of Air, which haunts me ; for
I have not had an Affair with any Woman this Month,
tho' never so secretly managed, but she has discover'd ;
for my part, I believe she deals with the Devil.

Asp. Now, Master, I am inclin'd to believe 'tis the
Devil himself ; the rather, because he wears Petticoats,
and chooses the Shape of a Woman, the easier to compass
the Ruin of a Man ; besides, 'tis a Form that best agrees
with his Infernal Qualities ; for I have often heard mar-
ried Men affirm, That a Woman has so much of the De-
vil in her Nature, that sometimes 'twou'd puzzle a Con-
jurer to distinguish one from t'other.

Man. Your Assurance his ill-tim'd — What evil
Conversation has corrupted your Manners ? [Exit Aspin.]

Court. Aspin approves of a modern Axiom, a Man
had better lose his Friend than his Jest — You may ob-
serve by his Sentiments how apt we are to imitate our
Superiors : The very Footmen grow profane, and Sense
is so much mistaken in these Days, that Religion and Ma-
trimony are the common Topicks for the Raillery of
our modern Wits, Lewdness being the distinguishing
Mark of a fine Gentleman, and Atheism of a Wit.

Man. This Humour spreads itself too much — But as
only foul Stomachs corrupt wholesome Food, so weak
Understanding only receive the Infection — Ignorance
is the rank Soil which produces the Weeds of Atheism.

B. 3, and

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and Obscenity ; but a Man of true Sense dares be modest and religious, notwithstanding the Tyranny of Custom.

Court. Custom indeed is the greatest Enemy to Truth ; she has made such a Similitude between Wisdom and Folly, they are hardly to be distinguish'd, and very often mistaken one for the other.

Man. Especially in our modern Conversation, where the height of Wisdom consists in exposing the Imperfections of Mankind, and Rudeness and Ill-Nature pass for Understanding.

Court. Well, 'tis pity Raillery ever shou'd be accepted for Wit.

Man. Which it will be, as long as Ill-Nature pleases every Body but the Person 'tis aim'd at.

Court. I am surpriz'd that the Vice or Folly of a Man shou'd contribute to the Pleasure of his Fellow-Creatures.

Man. These Philosophical Sentiments will never recommend us to the Ladies—If you design the Acquisition of their Favours, you must comply with the Modes, make your Wit a Pimp to your Pleasure, your Reason a Servant to your Interest; flatter the Person you have a Design upon; be satirically rude to the rest of her Company, and exquisitely scurrilous upon her absent Acquaintance; Scandal and Tea are a fine Woman's Nourishment. But this is a Lesson you are not to learn; and now we talk of a fine Woman, how goes the Widow and thee on ?

Court. Why, faith, like Man and Wife, continually quarrelling ; but I have at last found her to be a very Woman.

Man. How mean you ?

Court. She makes an Ass of every Lover she has, and don't know her own Mind half an Hour together; constant in nothing; her Vanity is intolerable; she has such an Opinion of her Beauty, she believes every Man that sees her is languishing ; and notwithstanding her Vow against Matrimony, 'tis her greatest Ambition to have a Crowd of Admirers ; she has Servants of all Sorts, and all Degrees, from the Nobleman to the Mechanick; from the Beau to the Ruslick ; from the Rake to the Usurer ; from the gay

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gay airy Fop of Twenty-one, to the supercilious Fanatick of Fifty-two; and from a red Coat and a Feather, to a japan'd Cane and a brush'd Beaver—In short, she has more Lovers than a pretty Wench in an University.

Man. I find the Widow has as many Worshippers as the Ass that carry'd the Egyptian Goddess, when many bow'd their Knees not to the Beast but to the Burden.

Court. Your Comparison is somewhat impolite.

Man. But apt and reasonable, Faith Charles: a free Jointure is the most attractive Grace in a Widow. I grant you may in the height of your Passion, say a world of fine Things of the Woman; but believe me, you amorous Wasps that make such Musick about the Gally-pot, come only for the Honey that's in't: But is it possible thou can't have a real Passion for the Widow?

Court. Why not? She has Youth and Good-Nature, and her Beauty is able to soften the most obdurate Heart.

Man. Thy Heart, *Courtwell*, is like a Looking-Glass, it presently receives the Image of what is represented before it, and as soon loses it; But you have a very powerful Rival that you don't know of yet, Sir Amorous Vainwit.

Court. I have seen the Gentleman, but have no Acquaintance with him. What Sort of a Spark is he?

Man. A Fellow that makes Intrigues the greatest Business of his Life; he's a Romance in *Folia*, compos'd of a thousand comical Adventures and pleasant Intrigues, which he vouches all to be his own. He has one Vice I greatly dislike; he will boast of Favours receiv'd from the first Women of Quality, when I am sure the Rogue never had an Affair with any thing above his Laundreis's Daughter, a Chamber-Maid, or a Citizen's Wife.

Enter Aspin.

Asp. Sir Amorous Vainwit's Chariot is at the Door; will your Honour be pleas'd to be within?

Man. Yes: Wait on him up. This worthy Knight will promise as much as a Courtier, and perform as little; when you are out of his Sight you are out of his Memory: He speaks ill of no Man to his Face, nor well of any behind their Backs, and is even vexatiously kind.

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with his Complements and external Civilities: He is often affronted, but never out of Humour; nay, I have known him tread upon a Man's Toes, on purpose to shew his Talent in asking Pardon: He is wond'rous fond of obsolete Words; I have known him compliment a Lady in the Terms of Chymistry and Fortification; his Conversation is meer Pedantry; he's full as ridiculous, and more unintelligible than a Quack-Physician.

Court. This is a very whimsical Character, and maliciously witty. Is he learned?

Man. Yes, as a French Taylor, in nothing but the Fashions.

Court. Of what Family is he?

Man. He was the Son of a Mercer; his Father was a good indulgent Man, and strove to make him (what Nature never design'd) a Scholar, and a Man of Parts: He put him early to the University, where he staid three Years to small purpose; from thence he was transplanted to one of our Collegiate Inns of Common Law, where he soon grew lawless, and unlearn'd his former little: But a Relation dying, and leaving a good Estate, he endeavour'd to improve himself, by feeing Foreign Places, so at once travell'd from his Country and himself, made the Tour of France, and is now return'd a very accomplish'd Aſſ.

Court. Did he bring Home nothing?

Man. Yes, abundance of mis-shap'd Cloaths, and the Vices of the Country.

Enter Sir Amorous (*laughing*.)

Sir Amo. Oh, *Manly!* I have almost burst my Sides with laughing. Ha, ha, ha!—Such an Adventure!—Ha, ha, ha!

Man. What's the Occasion of this Excess of Mirth?

Sir Amo. Occasion! Ha, ha, if ever there was greater Occasion, may I be—Ha! who's that? Mr. Courtwell here!—Now may Convulsions seize and excruciate my Optick Nerves if I saw him before—O Stupidity unparalleled, incongruous to all Sense and Breeding; 'd death, I have inadvertently and precipitately illaqueated my self in an irrecoverable Confusion—I am totally debilitated of all Power of Elocution, utterly incapable to excogitate

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ate an Apology of Efficacy, to abrogate his Censure of my Rusticity.

Man. Sir *Amorous*, won't you speak to Mr. *Courtwell*.

Sir Amo. Sir, I beg ten thousand Pardons for my abrupt entring the Room, deviating from the Rules of polite Breeding, and erroneously neglecting the just Oeconomy of good Behaviour, and can only hope to expiate the Guilt of my Inadvertency, by an Assveration of a spontaneous Contrition. I categorically blush to think how agretical I have been;—but the Faculties of my Soul were so dilated with the Novelty of my Adventure, that I unavoidably fell into this exorbitant and exuvious Eflux of Laughter, committing a Solicism of this Magnitude in good Manners.

Court. Sir, your good Manners give you too much trouble.

Sir Amo. Prithee, *Manly*, introduce me to Mr. *Courtwell*; I long to be acquainted with him, Dem me.—

Man. Can't you introduce your self, Sir.

Sir Amo. No, this Surprize has put me quite out of Countenance.

Man. That's a Miracle—Mr. *Courtwell*, this is Sir *Amorous Vainwit*, my particular Friend, and a Gentleman that has long had an Ambition to be known to you.

Sir Amo. Sir, I shou'd think my self much honour'd to be rank'd in the Number of your Acquaintance.

Court. To add one to the Number of my Friends, you are welcome, Sir.

Sir Amo. Sir, you do me too much Honour.

Man. But Sir *Amorous*, what Adventure is this you are so full of? Come, unlade, unlade.

Sir Amo. What! before Mr. *Courtwell*?

Man. Ay, ay, he's one of us, you may speak before him.

Sir Amo. May I—Why then I will—You know we Wits ought to be free before one another—There's *Charles Lackwit*, a pretty adroit Fellow, faith; very alert, and behaves well, when he and I meet at *Button's*, we are the most factious Company in the Universe; e-gad, we make Wit a perfect Tennis-Ball, bandy it from one to th' other. Why cou'd you think it?—We have laugh'd

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laugh'd at one another for three Hours together—As for my part, but no matter—I'll not speak—A Man shou'd not sound his own Trumpet you know—but I have put my Hand in the Lyon's Mouth,—and that, Sir,—somebody knows very well—

Court. But, Sir, your Adventure?

Sir Amo. Gadso, that's true—Why, you must know Mr. *Courtwell*, I had the good Fortune yesterday, to receive a Letter of Invitation from a certain Lady of Quality, to come and play a Game or two at Picquet with her in her Husband's Absence;—Now it was impossible, with Honour, to refuse meeting so fair a Challenger; not that I had any violent Inclination—for I had, at the same time, above twenty Assignations upon my Hands—I don't know what the Devil the Women see in me—'Tis the Pleasure of my Stars—But, to proceed—Fortune unluckily sent her Husband home before we expected him, which put the Lady somewhat in a Hurry; but I quickly dissipated her Fear, by concealing my self under the Table—Well, the Husband enter'd the Room, and in a few Minutes call'd for Supper, which upon the Word, was brought in: Then, Sir, the Lady and he sat down to it—But the best Jest is to come, Ha, ha, ha, for you must know, the Cuckold putting his Legs under the Table, and feeling me lie in his Way, gives me a confounded Kick on the Guts, crying, Get you out, you nasty, dirty Cur—A Pox on him for a cornuted Coxcomb, that cou'd not sinell his Hornet from his House-Dog.

Man. But you lay still I suppose.

Sir Amo. Most certainly—A Lady's Reputation is ever safe in the sacred Repository of my Understanding. But pray mark what follows:—The Monster was not contented with one Kick, but immediately gives me two or three more, crying, *Robin*, prithee pull this Dog from under the Table, I can't make him stir.

Court. How came you off then, Sir *Amorous*?

Sir Amo. Ha, ha, ha, came off! why triumphantly: For upon hearing that, I caught hold of part of his Leg with my Teeth, and bit him confoundedly:—He roar'd out like a Bull—Damme, the Dog has got hold of my Leg—

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Leg.—His Wife (knowing the Trick) pretended a Fright, squal'd out, leap'd up, and (as the saying is) accidentally on purpose overthrew the Table, and put out the Lights;—which gave me the Opportunity of making my Escape in the Hurry—which with Celerity I did, by *Jupiter*.

Court. I'll assure you, a very pleasant Adventure. So you sav'd the Lady's Reputation, and came off unhurt your self.

Sir Amo. I can't say altogether unhurt, because in the Fall of the Table, I happen'd to have a Dish of Soup overthrown upon me, which spoil'd a Suit of white Cloaths, and scalded my Legs confoundedly.

Man. That I confess was unfortunate: But where have you been this Morning?

Sir Amo. In *Elyzium*, by *Jupiter*.

Man. How!

Sir Amo. Revelling in Pleasures Imperial.

Man. Explain, explain, *Man*.

Sir Amo. Why, to deal ingenuously with you, I have paid a Visit this Morning to one of the beautifulst Women in the Universe—A Lady, Mr. *Courtwell*, that I had the good Fortune to take by the Heart some time ago;—but I can't forbear telling you the Happiness I enjoy'd this Morning with that Masterpiece of Nature—but I won't neither, you'll think me vain.

Man. Rather than you shou'd believe so, we'll not insist on it.

Sir Amo. Won't you?—Why, faith that's Good-natur'd now, and I will tell you—You must know the Minute my Chariot stopt at the Door, I was met by her Woman, and with the most exuberant Satisfaction, conducted to her Chamber; which I no sooner enter'd, but I had a full View of this charming Creature: I, Sir, adjusted my self with an agreeable Air, fetch'd a deep Sigh, clapt one Hand in my Bosom, and made a Bow down to the Ground—She, Sir, rises out of her easy Chair, lets fly her loose Gown, stretches out her Arms, crying, Ah, you Devil, what do you come for this Morning?—Her Posture was so provoking, and her Question so agreeable, that without answering one Word,

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Word, I shot into her Arms at once, embracing her with Herculean Force, and with a voracious Appetite fed on her lovely Lips, which were sever'd by a Breath sweeter than Arabian Winds, more fragrant than Violet Buds just opening to the Morning's Eye, and on those Rosy Mounts, inviting to the Taste, there hangs an amorous Moisture, Nectarious Dew, sweeter than that the Sun, when shining o'er the Eastern Hills, exhales from the Carnation Buds.

Court. But, Sir *Amorous*, of so many fine Women you have convers'd with, was you never honourably in Love with any one?

Sir Amo. Never, by Jupiter—and if ever I become guilty of that Folly, may I be conjugally trapp'd—No, Sir, I ne'er was reduc'd to the Necessity of gaining honourably one Woman, because I ever had the good Fortune to find the whole Sex at my Service, and upon my own Terms.

Court. You are a fortunate Man indeed; but notwithstanding your Success, I must believe there are a great many virtuous Women in the World.

Sir Amo. I can't contradict you, because I never try'd 'em all,—but may I perish if I don't think a handsome young Fellow, Importunity, and Opportunity, would shake the firmest Foundation of Virtue in any young Woman in Christendom.

Man. I wonder you shou'd be so averse to Matrimony, but I durst venture a good Sum you change your Opinion before the Year ends.

Court. Ay, ay, we must have you dub'd o'th' Order: What, Sir, you that have unmarry'd done such service in the Commonwealth, ought to receive the Honours due to it in Marriage.

Man. That he may do and never marry.

Sir Amo. As how! as how!—Come, I know you have a biting Jest at your Tongue's end: I like your Wit well, Colonel. Come, as how? as how?

Man. Why, if you can prove your Father was o'th' Order (which is very possible, we know he was a Citizen) and you lawfully begotten, then by the laudable

and patriarchal custom of no Custom.

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Custom of the City, you may be a Cuckold by your Father's Copy, and never serve for it.

Sir Amo. Gad, I have something in my Head that's very good.

Man. Is it possible! Come, out with it in the Name of Vanity.

Sir Amo. Why then, I must needs say, Colonel, your Satyr is like a Bee, it carries both Honey and a Sting, ha, ha, ha, you must allow that to be good.

Man. O admirable! Wit comes as easily from you, Sir *Amorous*, as Preferment from a Courtier without Money, or Money from a Citizen without Security.

Sir Amo. Very good again, Faith; I'd give an hundred Pounds I cou'd have said such a thing my self.

Enter Aspin.

Asp. Sir, a Porter brought this Letter for your Honour.

Sir Amo. Hum—hum—hum—'sdeath, a Man of Intrigue has a cursed Life—A Pox on't, I'll not go—The poor Soul will break her Heart too—Bid my Chariot turn about—Gentlemen, I must ask your Pardon, I hope the Violence of my Occasions will efficaciously prevail upon your Good Nature to excuse my abrupt Departure.

Man. O! we guessth' Occasion, and 'twould be barbarous to detain you.

Sir Amo. Generous Soul!—Mr. *Courtwell*, I beg you'll give me an Opportunity to establish an Acquaintance with you, and convince you how much I am your Admirer and humble Servant.

Court. Sir, 'tis an Honour you must confer on me.

[Exit *Sir Amorous*.]

Man. What think you of this Spark for a Rival?

Court. I have no great Apprehension of Danger from that Quarter; besides, I have luckily thought of a way to take him off from my Lady *Outside*.

Man. As how?

Court. By proposing my Sister to him.

Man. Very conscientiously consider'd! you'd ruin your Sister by marrying her to a Coxcomb, only to secure your Mistress.

Court.

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Court. No—I'll only engage him to make his Addresses to her, and pre-acquaint her with my Design, that she may hold him in play to give me the fairer Opportunity with the Widow: In short, I have told her the Proposal I made to you, but not your unkind Answer.

Man. No, that wou'd have been barbarous;—for tho' I have no very agreeable Thoughts of Matrimony, I shou'd be glad of her Friendship; an agreeable Acquaintance gives a Relish to all the Pleasures of Life—When shall I see her?

Court. That's a Question I can't tell how to answer. I disprove of a mutual Friendship between Persons of a different Sex, when there are no Thoughts of Marriage; such Intimacies are pernicious to Virtue, at least to Reputation, and Conversation too often discovers Charms that prove fatal to their Owner.

Man. Your Distrust of my Friendship will bring your own Sincerity into Suspicion. I own I love my Pleasure, but not so passionately as to sacrifice my Friend to it.

Court. Why, look ye, Colonel, we may please ourselves with very fine Notions of Friendship and Honour, but egad, when Youth, Wit and Beauty come in Competition, Reason generally sinks under th' Assault: The Eyes of a fine Woman are victorious Assailants; there's a sort of Magick in Beauty, which no Philosophy is Proof against. Desire is an irresistible Tyrant, that will break thro' the most sacred Tyes; and you must excuse me (I knowing your Temper) if I can't approve of your Acquaintance with my Sister, but upon an honourable Intention.

Man. But may I see your Widow? Prithee tell me where she lodges.

Court. I must ask your Pardon; I have Rivals enough already, and wou'd not create more. 'Tis not proper I shou'd let him know the Widow lodges in my Sister's House. [Aside:] Well, I'll take my leave of you for the present, and immediately put my Design upon Sir Amorous in Execution: In the mean Time, I'll set a third Person on, who is my Friend, to perswade the Widow to my Interest; while I, the better to hide my Artifice,

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Artifice, will add Deceit to it, and upon Sir Amorous's Neglect, will seem a little cold my self, which can't fail to make her the more complying: 'Tis the Nature of the Sex to judge of the Merit by the Number of their Admirers, and when courted by many, they generally are insolent to all.

Man. I always thought Love made an Ass of a Man, but never knew it made a Politician of him before.

Court. Take this for a certain Maxim:

Love Business by Deceit is surest done;
Woman's deceitful, and by that she's won. [Exeunt.

The End of the First ACT.



ACT II. SCENE a Chamber.

Lady Outside discover'd at a Toylet, Necessary waiting.

Wid.



HESE Weeds are very becoming to a fair Complexion, tho' I am quite weary of acting, and long to be out of 'em. Prithee, Necessary, how long has Sir Thomas Outside been dead?

Neces. Has Sir Thomas been dead—let me see—He has been dead just two Months and five Days, Madam.

Wid. No longer! I vow it seems an Age.

Neces. One would not suppose your Ladyship thought so by your inconsolable Grief; for I never hear his Name mention'd in Company, but that your Ladyship's ready to go into Fits.

Wid. Why ay; Custom has impos'd upon our Sex that Act of Dissimulation: Not but I must own, Tears upon that Occasion are very decent, and necessary.

Neces. Methinks your Ladyship was somewhat too

rash, when you made a Vow never to marry again ; but I hope you don't mean to keep it.

Wid. Do'st think I'm mad ?—No, no, that Vow, *Necessary*, was Policy, it makes the Men the more eager to address me ; they are naturally vain, and love to engage with Difficulties—You see how I am pester'd with humble Servants, for all my Vows.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Madam, Mr. *Vulture* is come to wait on your Ladyship.

Wid. Desire him to come up. [Exit Servant.]
Dye hear, *Necessary*, give me a clean Handkerchief, and my Bottle of Hartshorn—Well, there's a great deal of Trouble in performing the Ceremonies of Widowhood, and I really began so violently, that I fear, for Decency sake, I shall be oblig'd not to marry till my Year's expir'd.

Enter Mr. Vulture.

Vult. Madam, I am your humble Servant : What, still weeping ? Rainy Weather still !—A good Husband may serve as a warm Sun, to exhale those untimely Showers : But, Madam, I have made bold to wait on you this Morning, to know if I might wish you Joy yet of gaining your Cause ?

Wid. No, good Mr. *Vulture*, nor I don't know when I shall, there are so many Delays in the Law.

Vult. Indeed and so there are—but I hope you have good Council—for a Law-Suit may be said to resemble a Game of Chess, that may be play'd for Years by a Couple of expert Gamesters, but a Bungler may lose it by one false Move.

Wid. You observe right, good Mr. *Vulture* : And then 'tis like a fine new Building, no body can tell what it will cost, or when 'twill be finish'd—But pray sit down, Mr. *Vulture*, I want a little of your Advice ; you know a great deal of the Law. [They both sit.]

Vult. I have some Reason, good my Lady ; for I think come Easter-Term next, I have been in Law seven and forty Years.

Wid. You must now, Mr. *Vulture*, my Adversary has not pleaded yet.

Vult.

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Vult. Non pleadavit *Adversarius*, say you, so much the better, Madam :—Why what a Blockhead was his Attorney! Look'e, Madam, if he does not deliver in his Declaration by the next Essoign-Day, we'll Nonsuit him, and snap Judgment by Default. Pray Madam, who is your Attorney?

Wid. Mr. *Latitat* of *Lyon's-Inn*.

Vult. A very good Man truly, an experienc'd Practitioner, one that understands all the Quirks, Tricks, and Doublings of the Law. He is, in Truth, a stanch Attorney—But—

Wid. But what Sir?—

Vult. He does not put in Practice what he knows, he is a little too scrupulous; then there is another Thing, Madam, he wants Tools to work with.

Wid. What d'you mean, Sir?

Vult. Witnesses, Madam; they are the Life-Blood of a Cause; a good Attorney can no more thrive without 'em, than a Sharper can without false Dice—Now my Attorney, old *Cerberus* of *Clement's-Inn*, is never without 'em, Witnesses of all Sorts and Sizes, Fellows that are us'd to swear with brazen Faces, good Memories, and fear'd Consciences.

Wid. You jest with me sure—Is it possible there can be such Villany?

Vult. Ah! Madam, I perceive you don't know the World; there's no living in't without Industry and Artifice: My Friend *Cerberus* has found it by Experience, for he is worth near Forty Thousand Pounds.

Wid. I find, Mr. *Vulture*, Money is the only Deity you adore.

Vult. Except your fair self, my good Lady; for I have learnt by near fifty Years Experience, that the richest Men in the Nation have been always esteem'd the wisest and the best—But this is foreign to your Law-Suit, I wou'd recommend to your Ladyship some of those Witnesses.

Wid. To me!—I had rather lose my Cause, than make use of such hellish Instruments.—Have you no Conscience?

Vult. Ye—ye—yes, Madam; I have a convenient, C 2 fashionable,

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fashionable, modern *Surtout* Conscience, to slip on and off as Occasion shall serve.

Neces. My Lady will be blest with a Husband. [Aside.]

Wid. Well, but Mr. *Vulture*, if my Adversary shou'd plead, I shou'd be loth to stand to the Judgment of the Court.

Vult. *Non ad Judicium!* — Do you fear Corruption? Then I have a Trick to relieve you again: — You shall get a *Habeas Corpus, cum Causa*, and remove it higher.

Wid. I find, Mr. *Vulture*, you have Tricks enow o' Conscience.

Vult. I have Tricks enow o' Law, no matter for Conscience — 'tis not a Thing to thrive by — None but poor Folks pretend to it: — Ah! Madam! I love a litigious Suit; 'tis very *Manna* to me to be in Law; there is a Pleasure in the Vexation of others; I hug my self with the Thoughts of out-lawing a poor Rascal for Forty Shillings, before he knows any Thing of the Matter. I begin with *Capeas, alias & plures, Exigent and Proclamation*, and so proceed to a *Capeas ullagatum*, in the twinkling of a Term, and before he is *rectus in curea*, 'twill cost him Ten Pounds to reverse th' Outlawry; Then the unspeakable Satisfaction there is of hunting him thro' the several Windings and Labyrinths of the Law, to plague him with Ejectments, Elegits, Extents, Judgments, Executions, *Casa, & si fa, Scire-farias*, special Pleadings, Demurrers, Writs of Error, Rejoinders, Surrejoinders, Rebuters, Surrebuters, *cum multis aliis, que nunc prescribere longum est*; and then afterwards to toss him like a Tennis-ball thro' all the Courts of *Westminster-Hall*, from the Common-Pleas to the King's-Bench; thence to the Exchequer, and from thence into Chancery; and before the Game's up, I have a Bisk in my Sleeve, an Appeal to the House of Peers.

Wid. I see, Mr. *Vulture*, you are a perfect Master in the Jargon of the Law.

Vult. Truly, Madam, I have Reason: I have been a Term-Trotter any Time these seven and forty Years: In which space I have been at least sixteen Times beggar'd, and got up again, and in the Mire again, that I have stunk

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flunk again, and yet got up again—And now at this Time I can make it appear, that by Lying in Change-Alley, and Swearing in Westminster-Hall, I have got an Estate worth, *declaro*, Fifty Thousand Pounds; marry my good Lady, no contemptible Fortune; and (*in felice hora* be it spoken) I have at this Present nine and twenty Suits in Law.

Wid. Deliver me! what a wicked Caterpillar is this!

[Aside.]

Vult. And all not worth Forty Shillings—A Stake pull'd out of my Hedge, there's one: I was well beaten I remember, there's two: When my Wife was living I took a Man in Bed with her, there's three; I was call'd Cuckold for my Labour, there's four: A Neighbour kill'd my Dog for howling, there's five: My Wife mis-carry'd with a Push, there's six, &c sic de ceteris—I have so vex'd and beggar'd the whole Parish with Processes, Subpoena's, and such like Molestations, they are not able to spare so much ready Money from a Term as to set up a new Weather-Cock upon the Church; nay, the Church-Wardens are forc'd to go to Law with the Poor's Money—Then again, I subpoena you up all the Men from the Village where I live every Term, so that 'tis impossible to be at civil Cuckoldry within our selves, unless the whole Country rise upon our Wives.

Wid. One may guess by what you've said, you are not very well belov'd in your Neighbourhood.

Vult. No, marry wou'd I not, my good Lady; I know how to get more by my Enemies than my Friends; I am a perfect Master of the Science, and can fight you out all my Weapons at Law as clean as any Man.

Wid. What do you mean by your Weapons at Law?

Vult. There be several—As, your Writ of Delay, that is your Long-Sword; *Scandalum Magnum* is Back-Sword, *Capeas* & *Quominus*; Case of Rapiers; a Writ of Execution, Sword and Dagger; a good Conscience, Sword and Buckler—But that is a Weapon we seldom now-a-Days make use of in Westminster-Hall; indeed 'tis quite out of Date.

Neces. Pray, Sir, what Religion are you of?

[Very gravely, and cursing.]

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Vult. What Religion am I of?—Marry, Sweetheart, that's an odd Question—Why, I am ~~of~~—Why what Religion am I of—Why I am a Stock-Jobber, Sweetheart, and now and then I am a Sollicitor upon Occasion.

Necef. Here's a Rogue for you, who makes Interest his Religion—yet passes in the Eye of the World for a sober honest Man. [Aside.]

Vult. Getting Money, and going to Law, are the greatest Pleasures of my Life—I have got you in a Morning, in *Change-Alley*, by a well invented Lye, a Brace of Thousands. I ha, ha, ha, landed the Duke of *Berwick* twice in the North of *Scotland*, and got considerably by it—I took *Sterling-Castle* once, but that indeed did not answer, Stocks fell but One and a half *per Cent.* by that—Take my Word, Madam, I am a very ingenious Person.—But, Madam, I am come once more to you upon the old Cause—I hope you have almost, by this time, overcome your Grief for the Death of your first Husband, and will begin to consider upon making some other Man happy; I need not recommend my self to you more than I have done! You may find I am a Man to thrive in the World; and tho' I am a little old, I am hearty, Widow—and tho' the Snow does lie upon the Mountain-top, let me tell you there's a Warmth in the Valley.

Wid. O Mr. *Vulture*, you are a Man that I could have no Objection to, but my Vows, my Vows—and then to think of my poor Husband, the kindest, best of Husbands, Oh! oh! oh! [cries out.] Oh! I shall never forget him!

Necef. No, nor I neither, Madam, I am sure I'm ready to break my Heart ev'ry time I think of him—for he was a-a-a ve-ve-very good Man at the bottom. Oh! oh! oh!

Vult. He was a very good Man indeed—I can't forbear Weeping too when I think of him. [All cry.]

Enter Sir Amorous.

Sir Am. Madam, your Ladyship's most obsequious Vassal—Hey day! what! where am I? In the House of Mourning sure—Come, come, Madam, dry your Eyes; your Grief is of too long Duration: Pity your fair self, clear

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clear up those radiant Lamps, restore 'em to their first Creation, Windows for Light, not Sluices made for Tears.

Vult. Verily, my good Lady, the Gentleman is in the right on't: Come, come, you must forget him.

Sir Am. Forget him! Ay, ay, Madam, and lose the Thoughts of him in the Possession of a better Husband.

Wid. Ah Sir, that's impossible! His Fellow's not on Earth.

Sir Am. No, Madam: Why, what d'you think of me? [Turning to the Glass, and adjusting himself.]

Vult. Ay, Madam, or what d'you think of me—Mighty pretty Eyes those—mighty pretty Eyes truly—Hide 'em for Shame, hide 'em, or you'll kill every body you look upon—[Peeping in her Breasts.] Gads my Life! there's a pair of delicate white Breasts to stare a Man in the Face—Nay, you have murder'd me, that's certain, I'll lay my Death to you.

Wid. You are pleas'd to be merry, Sir.
Vult. Say you so?—But 'tis in your Power to make me merrier, you understand me—[Patting her with his Cane.] Mum! a word to the Wise is enough—ha! those Eyes! those Eyes! why, I am not so old as I look to be

—I am not above Threescore; a good Age, a very good Age indeed—I have liv'd temperately, not wasted my Health, nor my Strength upon the wanton Baggages of the Town, Hem! hem! There's Lungs! there's a Voice like a Game Cock—Hem! hem: [falls a Coughing, Necessary strikes him on the Back.] So very well Sweet-heart; I am mightily troubled with Phlegm—od I took it a little too high for my Constitution, but every time I look upon you, I fancy my self but Eighteen, and my Heart springs in my Belly like a Bird in a Cage. [Coughs.] Oh Phlegm, Phlegm!

Sir Am. Pray Madam, how do you like the Cloaths I have on to Day?

Wid. They're wonderful becoming, and the Fancy perfectly new.

Sir Am. Indeed, Madam, they have an exotick Air, that's true.

Wid. There's no Man dresses more agreeable than you do

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do Sir Amorous, or obliges the Town with more new Fancies.

Sir Am. And without Vanity I speak it, no Man has been more successful in that Matter than my self — Pray Madam, observe how I put on my Hat — There, does not that look very smart?

Wid. O very smart.

Sir Am. I have an inimitable Cock with my Hat, that adds a Vivacity to my Looks, and gives my whole Face an Air agreeable and serene; and now I am talking of Dress, I'll tell you something very pleasant upon that Subject: — You must know, some time ago, a very pretty young Lady fell passionately in Love with me, for the ingenuous and lively Fancy I express in my manner of Dressing: — May I be struck dumb to Perpetuity, if it ben't true. — I continu'd an Affair with her for some time; but her Passion grew so great, and her Conduct so small, that I was forc'd to decline my Acquaintance; for I swear I should not endure to have any Body think I ever had an Affair with a Woman in my Life: — Well, there's an unspeakable Pleasure in keeping ones Amours a Secret to the World.

Court. within. Prithee Tom don't be impertinent, I must go in.

Serv. within. Indeed Mr. Courtwell, my Lady gave me strict Orders to keep you out.

Court. within. Indeed, Tom, you'll get your Head Broke for your Diligence.

Enter Courtwell.

Court. Madam, I'm your humble Servant — Heyday! what have we here, the Widow between December and July, courted at once by Nestor and Adonis,

Wid. What means this base Companion?

Court. Base, Madam! he's not base that fights as high as your Lips — Come, come, put off those melancholy Weeds — Thou hast done virtuously, thou hast strangely griev'd for thy Husband, spent more Tears for his Death, than would serve a whole City of Widows in a Plague-time, besides Sighings and Swoonings not to be credited.

Wid. Am I still to be troubled with your rude Addresses, I thought I had given you an Answer long since.

Will

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Will no Denials shock thee? What is it thou presum'st on.

Court. On your Judgment, Madam; not to make Choice of yon' walking Hospital, or that Butterfly for an Husband; Fools with no more Merit than what consists in lac'd Coats and full Bags; but of an honest hearty Fellow, endow'd with Health, Love, Youth and good Nature, which (in no more deform'd Person than my self) may deserve you.

Wid. Was ever such Rudeness?

Court. Dear Madam, don't give the Child a wrong Name, term not that Rudeness which the *Sages* call true Confidence, founded on the most infallible Rock of a Woman's Inconstancy—In short, Widow, I am resolv'd to make you happy, in spite of all the Resolutions you have ta'en to the contrary: I can't suffer such a delicious Flower to perish on the Stalk, or be savagely pluck'd by by a prophane Finger.

Wid. Well, if ever I forgive this, may I —

Court. O! no more Vows, dear Widow—If I have offended you, let your remorsless Chambermaid seize on my despis'd Body, bind me Hand and Foot, and hurl me—into your Ladyship's Bed.

Wid. Well, I protest I do more and more admire thee for—

Court. Madam, Ignorance is the Mother of Admiration, know me better, and you'll admire me less.

Wid. What would'st thou have me know? — Why dost thou haunt me thus? —

Court. Only Madam, that the *Aetna* of my Sighs, and *Nilus* of my Tears, pour'd forth in your Presence, might witness to you the hot and moist Affection of my Heart, and procure some Favour from your sweet Tongue, or your more sweet Lips, or what else your Ladyship shall esteem more conducible to your divine Contentment.

Wid. I find thou hast no Sense of Shame left, and art not to be mov'd by ill Usage—Therefore let me beg this as a Favour, that you wou'd give over your impertunate Suit, and never shock me any more with that impudent hideous Face of thine.

Court.

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Court. Come, come, not so despicable neither, Widow :—'Tis true, I don't use Milk, or Almond-Powder to it, but faith 'tis an honest Face tho', that can look against a Storm, or light a Fire at a Widow's Lips :—*Probatum est.* [Kissing her, she struggling.

Wid. Poison ! Toads and Serpents !

Court. Aromatick Perfumes ! Orange-Chips, and Heart-Cherries.

Wid. I never met with any Thing so impudent—He's a charming Fellow, Faith. [Aside.]

Court. Nor I with any Thing so lovely, and were it Treason to kiss these Lips, I wou'd die in the Sin—Prithee Widow make me thy Husband ; thou shalt have swinging Interest for thy Money, tho' the Principal be funk.

Wid. Husband ! Injure not that sacred Title with thy prophane Lips :—Can I e'er think of a second Husband, rememb'ring the first ?

Court. But view my Person well. [Turns about.] What think you, Does it not promise Heirs and Successors ? Faith I love thee heartily—

Wid. Love me ! Love my Dog.

Court. That I'm bound to do by the Proverb.

Wid. I'll have you toss'd in a Blanket. [Hugging her.]

Court. In your Sheets Widow—Content—and you shall be my Toller—'s Death, what an armful of Provocation is here ? [Still embracing her.]

Wid. Gentlemen, can you stand tamely by, and see a Woman insulted thus by such a base Companion.

Vult. to Sir Amo. Sir, do you speak to him, I am not a Man o'th' Sword ; but if he says any Thing I can lay hold on, I promise you to take the Law of him.

Sir Amo. Sir, this Carriage is repugnant to the good Manners which ought—

Court. Sir— [Putting on his Hat.]

Sir Amo. Will you take a Pinch of Snuff, Sir.

Court. Damn your Snuff—D'y'e mean to affront me. [Obsequiously.]

[Strikes it in's Face, he stands and sneezes.]

Vult. O fy, Sir ! Does this become a Gentleman ?

Court.

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Court. Do'st thou prate, old Touchwood? Another Word, and I'll unscrew thy moldy Nose from thy Moth-eaten Face—You think of Matrimony—Prithee go home, old Sapless, ask Forgiveness for the Sins of thy Youth, and whistle to thy Grandchildren.

Vult. Sir, you are unmannerly: I am not so Old but I may live to whistle to Children of—

Court. Thy Neighbour's begetting, Old Cent. per Cent.—But can such an old Rascal as thou art have the Vanity to—

Vult. Bear witness, Madam, bear witness, he has call'd me Rascal; that's *Scandalum Magnatum*, I'll trounce you for that.—Take Notice, I am upon my Preferment, in the Way of Marriage, and you have call'd me Rascal before my Mistrel's Face; that will bear a swinging Action.

Sir Amo. If I put up so publick an Affront, I shall be made the common Anvil of the Town; I must draw my Sword to preserve my Reputation, tho' I drop it immediately; besides, he may have as little Courage as my self, for I have often known a red Coat cover a Coward: [Aside.] Sir, you must give me leave to return your Favour. [Strikes him, draws, they fight, Sir

Amorous drops his Sword.

Sir Amo.—Why ay, this is like a Man of Honour, now.

Wid. What mean you, Sir, by this Insolence?—I hope you are not wounded—Well, 'tis a vast Pleasure to have Men fight about one.

Sir Amo. By no other Weapons than your own puissant Eyes, against which no Poitrel is able to defend the Heart of Man. [To *Wid.* aside.] I hope, Madam, you will excuse my Departure; but, dear Lady, let me conjure you not to entertain the least Concern for my ill Fortune; we must submit to Fate—The greatest Generals in the World have met with a Defeat.—Madam, I kiss your immaculate Hands. Sir, yours. [Exits]

Wid. This is very fine! and will redound much to my Reputation.

Vult. [Creeping from under the Table:] I am very glad there is no Mischief done: but I can take my Oath, the other

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other gave the first Blow—Indeed you did give the Affront, by flinging the Snuff in his Face;—but that is not an Assault:—Therefore I wou'd have you bind him over to the Peace, put him in the Crown-Office, swear an Assault against him: I am a Witness he struck first; and a very little Cost will procure you a Jury that will allow you vast Damages, and I'll take care and manage it?

[Exit.]

Wid. How dare you stay in my Presence after such Insolence.

[Walks about.]

Court. While from Love's Altars Clouds of Sighs arise,
In smoaking Incense to adore thy Eyes.

[Drawling.]

Wid. Sir, your Poetry is as disagreeable to me as your Company; but if I must be persecuted with the latter, pray speak to me in plain Terms; I hate Verse.

Court. Why then, in plain Terms, I am most damnable in Love with you.

Wid. That's plain enough. But let me tell you, I am—

Court. In Love with me. Ay, ay, I know you are Madam.

Wid. No Sir—But I am sensible you are—

Court. Very handsome—I know that too, Madam;—but, Lord, Madam, you need not be so fond to tell me so however.

Wid. Don't mistake me, Sir—for I think you—

Court. A very clever Fellow altogether, and very fit to be your Lover.

Wid. Pray Sir, give me Leave to speak.

Court. Agreed—But pray leave off Praising me:—Upon my Word, Widow, if you don't, I shall think you too forward.

Wid. Then Sir, I must tell you, I think you have a prodigious Stock of Assurance to intrude thus rudely into my Chamber: and pray tell me, how you dare do thus?

Nec. Ay, Sir, how dare you do thus? how dare you, I say?

Court. Now must I stop this Jade's Mouth.

Nec. Come, Sir, why don't you Answer how you came

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came in, and who gave you Leave?—Come, Answer, Answer, Answer, Sir.

Court. If you don't hold your troublesome Tongue, Mrs. Powderbox, I shall stopt your Mouth with half a Piece. [Aside to her.

Nec. Do your worst, I dare you to't—for I wou'd have you to know, a Woman's Tongue was not made to lie still, and whenever you come here again, pray learn the Manners to—

Court. Pay the Chambermaid's Fees as soon as I come in. [Runs to her, puts Money in her Mouth,

she struggles, he kisses her.

Wid. O what do you mean, to murdur us?

Nec. O Madam, he has quite stopt my Breath, I am not able to speak a Word more.

Wid. Sir, what have you observ'd in my Behaviour at any Time, to encourage you to such Insolence? Sure you imagine you are in Company with some of your leud Creatures.

Court. No; but I am in Company with the most disdainful, affected Coquet in Town; one who has more Vanity than her whole Sex, and as ill-natur'd as an old Maid.

Wid. I find, Sir, you'll oblige me to leave the Room.

Court. No, Madam; but I'll oblige you to stay, and take this Opportunity to inform you of my sincere Thoughts.—Nay, nay, you shan't stir, till I have held to you a Glas wherein you shall behold your Follies—I love you, and 'tis my Love which makes me free—I have hitherto born your Scorns with Patience—Indeed, I ever was too much your Friend to flatter you, or I might have receiv'd Favours as great as those Fops that have the Art of tickling your vain Ears with your own Praises; for Flattery is your darling Vice.

Wid. O dear! Is it out of Humour then? and does it rail? Ha! ha, ha. Is it angry indeed?

Court. Yes indeed is it, tho' its Pride won't let it own it—Psha! Psha! this Mirth is all feign'd!—nothing but Affectation!—I know you perfectly; you are the Reverse of what you appear—you laugh when you are most displeas'd, and seem most Angry when you are

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most in Humour—Right Woman's faith—Ha! the Fan
tore—Woman every Inch of her.

Wid. You are come to rail, I find. [Walking about,
be following her.

Court. You have said true, Madam—You are of so
inconstant a Temper, that you break this Minute what
the last you resolv'd on: The Wind changes not half so
often as your Resolutions.

Wid. Have you done, Sir?

Court. Not half.—I confess you are, are very hand-
some: Nature has given you a surpassing Beauty, but
Pride, Affection, and Self-conceit, darken with Folly
your exterior Charms.

Wid. This Boldness, Sir—

Court. Is not pleasing—I know it is not Madam, and
yet 'tis Friendship all.—I wou'd have your Mind as
beautiful and attractive as your Face, which is free from
the least Defect.—Faith, Widow, I am true, as your
Glass, and will shew you all your Graces, with your
Imperfections; for tho' I love you, yet I look on you
with impartial Eyes.—You are affected, very affected,
and I see it; yet love you too.

Wid. This Assurance.

Court. You are Proud too; proud of what you are
not sure to possess an Hour, Beauty, which is always
withering, 'tis the worst Part of a Woman—

Wid. Pray, Sir, take a little Breath; for by this
Time methinks you shou'd want it.

Court. Then for your Reputation—which is but
slightly guarded—

Wid. How, Sir—

Court. I say it again, Madam, your Reputation is but
slightly guarded; for by your Coquetry you lie open to
Scandal, and the Lash of all detracting Tongues, which
are ever busie on the least Occasion; the Reputation of
a Woman is like that chaste Flower the *Amaranthus*,
which is no sooner touch'd, but withers; or a fair chry-
stal Glass, our very Breath will dull it:—But your
Ambition (notwithstanding your Vow against a second
Marriage) is to have a Number of Gallants—You are
become the Discourse of the Chocolate-House—The
young,

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young, the beautiful Widow *Outside*, is a Butt for every Fop to aim his Rhetorick at; and will you persevere in your Errors, still be blid to your Mis-conduct?

Wid. You talk as if you were really my Husband;—but I desire you wou'd use these Freedoms where you have more Power.

Court. I hope I have some Influence over you.

Wid. You are mistaken, I assure you, Sir; and however the good Humour I have treated you with (which was more in Respect to your Sister, than any real Esteem for your self,) may have flatter'd you into a false Opinion of my Love; you'll find your self egregiously mistaken—So, Sir, eternally adieu—I never was so provok'd in my Life, and I have a good Mind to marry him, to be reveng'd on him. [Exit.

Court. She's gone, and I have lash'd her Vanity till it smarts—I know she loves me, tho' her Affectation wou'd conceal the charming Flame;

*Tis certain she has felt Love's powerful Dart,
Each Look, each Action does confess the smart:
The amorous God his Trophies does display,
And what her Heart wou'd bide, her Eyes betray. [Exit.*

The End of the Second ACT.



ACT III. SCENE a Chamber.

(Table and Candles.)

Enter Miranda and Courtwell.

Mir. Y, marry Brother, this Widow wou'd be a Jewel worth the wearing, if a Man knew how to win her—Well, I'll be your Advocate, and plead your Cause as well as I can, tho' I despair of Success.

Court. Why so, *Miranda*?

Mir. Because Love can no more be carry'd on with-

D 2 out

40 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

out Money, than a Suit of Law, and you know you have the Curse of a younger Brother's Fate, and consequently, must sue in *Forma Pauperis*—My Father, you know, was most indulgent to the weakest; he has left the Fool my elder Brother a large Estate to get him a Wife; I, who am but a homely Girl, a considerable Portion to procure me an Husband, and you a sufficient Wit to make your Fortune.

Court. A very pretty Legacy, Faith. Well, since 'tis my all, I must put it to the best Use I can, and that is, I think, to redouble my Attack upon the Widow.

Mir. Might I advise, Brother, you shou'd raze the Siege, believe me, 'twill be Time lost:—If there were no other Bar, she is too Rich, too much above you.

Court. There you're out, Sir; young Widows and old Maids, are the only Refuge for younger Brothers. Widows are the only Judges of Man's Flesh, and have a greater Respect to something else in a Husband than a Fortune. Look you, *Miranda*; in one Speech, why shou'd I despair that *Cupid* has one Dart in store for *Lady Outside*, as well as any other rich Lady, whom he has made to stoop to her Cook, her Butler, or her Footman; such Marriages the present Age has produc'd, and yet none of 'em been more than a nine Days Wonder. In a Word, I am sure of Success; such Attemptrs, pursu'd with Resolution, are ever seconded by Fortune.

Mir. But Brother, do you consider the Vows she has made against a second Marriage?

Court. Womens Vows, like great Mens Promises, are often made, but rarely kept: Why, you see she is already accessible for Suitors; and let me tell you, if once a Woman consent to parly with her Lover, he may promise himself a Surrender, depend on't. I have set her Heart upon as fickle a Pin as the Needle of a Dial, that will never let it rest 'till it be in the right Position.

Mir. Why do you imagine this?

Court. Because I saw *Cupid* shoot in my Words, and open his Wounds in her Looks; her Blood went and came of Errants, betwixt her Face and her Heart; and such Changes, I can tell you, are shrewd Tell-Tales.

Mir. Your Vanity alone, which mistakes the Effects
of

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 41

of her Resentment for the Symptoms of Love : I know she can't endure you — Besides, such Vows, such Resolutions —

Court. Her Vows are gone to Heav'n with her Husband, they bind not upon Earth ; and as for Women's Resolutions, I must tell you, the Planets and the Winds have a great Stroke in 'em, and if they prove not as weak as Wafers, say I have no Skill in the Sex.

Mir. But then such Sorrow, such a continu'd Course of Mourning —

Court. For all this I'll not despair ; I never yet knew a Woman mourn so violently but she dissembled. Experience tells me how short-liv'd Widows Tears are ; their weeping is, in Truth, but laughing under a Mask, they mourn in their Gowns, and laugh in their Sleeves ; all which I firmly believe, and am resolv'd to die in that Faith.

[Exit.]

Mir. Go thy Ways, and if Confidence have any Influence in Courtship, thou hast enough to promise thee Success with half the Sex — But now for my own Affair with the Colonel ; I long to know the Success of the last Embassy, and am impatient till Betty return.

[Exit.]

SCENE changes to Col. Manly's Apartment ; Betty enters thro' a private Place in the Wainscot, and shuts up the Pannel.

Bet. So, I have watch'd a good Opportunity ; the Colonel and his Servant are abroad, and I am got safely here in the Dark, because no Suspicion may happen by discovering a Light in the Room — Let me see — Where have I put my Mistres's Letter, which I am to leave upon the Table ? O Heavens ! my eager Haft has made me leave it behind me : Sure I'm not in Love, that I'm so forgetful — 'Tis no matter, it lies but in my own Room, I can quickly return with it — Ha ! I can't find my Way out again — 'Tis so dark, that I don't know whereabouts I am ! [Feeling about for the private Place.] I have done finely — So, I see a Light, some Body's coming — I find the Train of Discovery has took Fire, and all our Plot will be blown up in a Trice.

[Aspin unlocks the Chamber-Door, and enters with a Candle.]

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Aſp. Now am I almost afraid to enter, least I should meet with some of these Fairies—*Stands peeping and trembling at the Door.*] Shall I [Betty bides her ſelf by the ſide Scene.] venture or no? Hang Fear, 'tis below a Man of my Courage—*Comes forward a little; Betty ſlips behind him, and moves as he does.*

Bet. Now if I can ſee whereabout the private Door is, I'll attempt to blow out the Candle, and whilſt he goes to light it again, I may find an Opportunity to ſlip away; 'tis but venturing, Fear and Necessity often make Cowards brave, and give their Courage Success.

Aſp. [Peeping about.] I begin to be a little afraid; I wiſh none of these Fairies be here invisible; for me-thinks the Candle begins to burn blue. [Walks about the Room, ſtarts at the Table.] What's that! oh! 'tis the Table—Here's nothing here—[After he has walk'd about the Room, while ſhe follow'd him, he gets in the middle of the Stage and ſpeaks.] Hem!—Now my Heart's in my Belly again, and my Courage is return'd—I don't believe, if the Devil himſelf were here (Lord bleſſ us) I ſhou'd be afraid—[She ſtrikes him a Box o'th' Ear.] Hump! that ſubſtantial Favour cou'd not come from a Thing of Air; it had the full Weight of Flesh and Blood—[Turns about and holds up the Can-dle to her Face; ſhe blows it out, just at which Col. Man-ly enters.] What the Devil are you, Madam—Oh the Devil! the Devil! the Devil!

Enter Col. Manly.

Col. Either my Eyes deceiv'd me, or I ſaw the Glimpſe of a Woman as I enter'd—Aſpin, what's the Matter.

Aſp. O dear, Sir, are you there?—For Heaven's Sake have a care of your ſelf—Here's a whole Troop of Devils in the Room, besides a vast Tribe of Witches and Fairies.

Col. Prithee be quiet, Blockhead.

Aſp. Dear Sir, make no Words, but ſend immediate-ly for a Parſon. I am bewitch'd! I am poffeſſ'd! The Devil has conjuſ'd his Flames into my right Ear already.

Bet. Now I ſhall get off. [She feeling about for the private Place, the Col. lays hold of her.]

Col. Have I caught you? I have laid hold on one I'm

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 43

I'm sure, and 'tis a Woman. *Aspin*, run and fetch a Light quickly.

Bet. What shall I do?

Asp. A Woman! the greater Devil than I'm sure— Let her go, dear Sir, let her go.

Col. Bring a Candle I say— [Exit Aspin.] I find my little Fairy, there's some Substance in you—I have a strong Inclination to try if you be Flesh and Blood; the Room is dark, and very fit for the Purpose.

Bet. What shall I do?— Fortune, stand my Friend but now, and I'll never tempt thee so again. [Gives a sudden Spring out of his Arms.] I'm free at last.

Col. Are you at that Sport, my Dear?— Nay, then I'll secure the Door, and if you are a Spirit, you shall exert your Power, and vanish thro' the Keyhole.

[Runs to the Door, pulls it too, and holds it fast.

Bet. So, now I have found the right Place, and if ever I venture so again, I wish I may be ravish'd.

[Betty goes thro' the private Door, and shuts it after her.

Col. I hear no Body stir.

Enter Aspin with a Candle.

Asp. I have brought a Candle, Sir: Come bring the Fairy to the Light; I can look at her with more Pleasure now she's a Prisoner, than I felt her a little while ago— Master, we'll swear she's a Witch, and have her burnt— Where is she, Sir? [Looking about.

Col. Where is she?— Why, in the Room I think.

Asp. [Looking about the Room.] I can't see her, Sir; but perhaps she may have conjur'd a Mist before my Eyes, for I can't perceive the least Glimpse of any Body but your self— Why, you have not got hold of her now, have you Master?

Col. Got hold of the Devil, you Blockhead— How is it possible she shou'd get away?— I am certain I secur'd the Door. Surely she deals with the Devil.

Asp. I warrant she does, and he has carry'd her away in a Whirlwind.

Col. I am distracted till she's found.

Asp. Then Sir, 'twill be a long Time before you recover your Senses.

Col.

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Cal. 'Sdeath to be thus out-witted by a Woman! I'll find her out I'm resolv'd.

Afp. Ah! Sir, don't be too curious, it may be very fatal to us; for Spirits, like Statesmen, don't care that ordinary Persons shou'd pry too much into their Secrets.

Cal. This Fellow is as fearful at Thirty, as a raw Boy that is bred up with an old Grandmother, and had his Education only amongst Women.—I'll employ one Hour more of this Night, I'm resolv'd, to make the Discovery. Come along Trembler. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the Widow's Lodgings.

Table and Candles.

Enter Clarinda and the Widow.

Wid. Nay, dear Cousin, tell me what you have met with, since you have been with *Miranda*, to occasion this sudden Uneasiness? I am sorry you have so mean an Opinion of my Friendship or Sincerity, to refuse acquainting me with this Cause of your Tears.

Clar. Dear Cousin forgive me; and if your Patience will permit, you shall know the Cause of 'em—You are sensible, that before my Father dy'd, his Extravagance had consum'd the greatest Share of his Patrimony, and left me only with two hundred Pounds to the Care of my Uncle, who quickly deny'd me the Protection of his House; and turn'd me out a Prey unto Misfortune.

Wid. This I have heard, and often wonder'd at my Uncle's Barbarity.

Clar. The Fault was mine, and 'tis severely punish'd. Know that wicked Man, Sir *Amorous Vainevit*, came down with a Relation of my Uncle's to his House in *Wiltshire*, where I then resided.—My Beauty tempted him to betray my Innocence:—He had not been many Days before he made known his Passion.—I then being young, unknowing in the subtil Wiles of Men, with Pleasure hearken'd to his Love: He soon perceiv'd his Conquest, and made a stronger Application: At length his Oaths and Vows so won upon my Heart.—I blush to tell the rest.

Wid. Wicked Man!

Clar.

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Clar. After he had subdu'd my Virtue, his Occasions press'd him up to *London*. He left me, but with strong Assurances of Marriage—Six Months were pass'd without e'er hearing from him :—But then, the Punishment of guilty Love I cou'd conceal no longer—My Aunt made me confess the whole Affair ;—but still conceal'd it from my Uncle's Knowledge, till I was brought to bed of a fair Boy, the Witness of his unhappy Mother's Shame ; then my cruel Uncle show'r'd on me all his Rage, and soon as I was able, turn'd me from his House.

Wid. Poor *Clarinda*.

Clar. I then came up to Town—My Boy, Heaven was pleas'd to take—I found out Sir *Amorous* ; but he, to add to my Afflictions, when I expected Pity and Redress, despis'd and scorn'd me ; and while I was drinking Tea with *Miranda* this Afternoon, her Brother, Mr. *Courtwell*, propos'd him to her for a Husband—You may be sure this alarm'd me ; for shou'd he marry, then all my Hopes of Help from him were lost, and I should be abandon'd to the utmost Shame and Poverty.

Wid. I am not so much surpriz'd at the Ingratitude of Mankind, who generally return with Neglect the highest Obligations of our Sex, as that after so many Examples of their Perfidy, we shou'd ever confide in their false Oaths, and Promises, and purchase Contempt at the Expence of our Virtue and Fame—But, dear Cousin, I cannot express my Concern for your Misfortunes ; I wou'd advise you quickly to make *Miranda* acquainted with your Story. She's good-natur'd, and will contrive some Means for your Redress.

Clar. I have already—I waited till her Brother went away, and told her all—Her tender Heart was mov'd ; she promis'd me her Aid, bid me have Hope, for that she wou'd engage I shou'd marry him before I went to Bed ; but how that's possible I can't conceive. However, she assur'd me, it shou'd be so ; and has order'd me to be with her by Eight o'Clock.

Wid. This is surprizing ! 'Tis now after Six—I suppose she'll not go out to Night, so Cousin, I'll go to her Apartment, pay her a Visit by my self, and encourage her to proceed in your Cause.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE

46 W O M A N i s a R I D D L E .

SCENE changes to Col. Manley's Lodgings.

Enter Colonel and Aspin.

Col. I wonder that no body appears yet.

Asp. Heav'n send they mayn't, for if they shou'd,
they'd make my Hair bristle up an End like a Turkey-Cock's Tail.

Col. What still repeating the same fearful Tune.

Asp. Ay, Sir, if you call it so; but Fear makes very dull Musick; the Sound of such another Box on the Ear, wou'd reduce it to nothing but Discord. Me-thinks, tho' I have no great Skill, 'tis like touching the Strings too harshly.

Col. Come, no more of your Nonsense.

Enter Miranda thro' the private Door, with a Dark-Lantern in her Hand.

Col. I fancy, I hear some body tread.

Asp. O Lord! no sure! Master, pray let me fetch a Candle.

Col. You talk like a Blockhead: We are likely to make a Discovery of any Thing with a Light.

Asp. I know what my Master talks like—if I durst tell him, to suppose we can make a Discovery of any Thing without. O Lord! yes, I beg his Pardon, now I think on't, a Woman may be discover'd in the Dark.

Mir. I'll stay here, and write my *Billet deux*. Well, now I'm pretty safe; but I run as many Dangers as a romantick Knight in an enchanted Castle, and Love has made me full as ridiculous—I have just Reason enough to know I act against Reason, else why shou'd I be so industrious to declare my Passion to the Man, and at the same Time, so desirous to conceal my Person from his Knowledge. Certainly, I am actuated by that little Deity, Cupid, who sports himself in the whimsical Actions of us Mortals.

Asp. I fancy I heard something mention Enchantment just now. I am afraid the Devil is in the Room, for I begin to smell Brimstone—Pray, Sir, let us go down Stairs, for if we stay in this Room much longer, we shall be both frightened out of our Wits.

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Col.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 47

Col. Come this Way: If I am not mistaken, I heard some body in the Room.

Afp. Dear Sir, don't let us venture thus in the Dark, for the Fairies may have some evil Design upon us; besides, it looks very much like the Sin of Presumption.

Col. Tread softly, and don't give the Enemy Notice of our Approach.

Afp. Lord, Sir, I am just ready to beat an Alarm with my Teeth.

Col. Hold your Tongue, you Son of a Whore, and keep your Teeth together, or I'll cut one out, and beat the other down your Throat.

Afp. Pray, Sir, let me fetch a Light.

Mir. So, here's the Table. Now for a Dispatch of Bushels. [Sits down, opens the Lanthorn and writes.

Col. You may spare your self the Trouble; for see, you no sooner desire a Light, but you have one.

Afp. O Lord! what do I see?—There's the Devil in *Propria Persona*—Master, dear Sir, have you never an Errand to send me of?—O Lord, O Lord! my Heart beats a March to my Heels.

Col. I'll beat your Brains out, if you don't make your Heart and your Heels agree.

Afp. Lord, Sir, you quite mistake the whole Matter, they are agreed upon going, and only want you to give the Word.

Col. Sirrah, hold your Tongue.

Afp. You need not bid me, for Fear has made me so dry in my Mouth, that my Tongue is almost become useless; but if you don't make haste, my Teeth will quickly do the Office of my Tongue, and tell her how my Heart beats. O! a Ghost! an Apparition! A Parson, a Parson! fetch a Parson quickly! [Colonel goes behind the Table, takes up the Lanthorn, and claps hold of Miranda.

Mir. I am betray'd!

Col. Stand away Blockhead—Have I caught you, Madam? I'll take Care you than't slip thro' my Hands again. [Looks on her.] Ha! methink I he'er saw one so beautiful before—What means this Palpitation at my Heart—Tis so; she's some Divinity come down from Heav'n

48 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Heav'n to bless me, and I have offended her with my Rashness. [Gazing at her.

Afp. So; now will my Master be for committing Fornication with a Witch.

Mir. I find I have some Influence over him; at least, the Vanity of my Sex tells me so:—Heaven send it may be true—My Hand is in the Lion's Mouth, and I must pull it very gently out to make my Escape.

Col. What a sudden Invasion have her Charms made on my Heart?

Afp. How earnestly my Master stares on this gay Shadow? 'Tis no more I'm sure; for I'll warrant it will vanish presently.

Col. Madam, who you are I know not, nor can I remember I ever saw you before—But what you are, Angel nor Goddess are Terms great enough to express—therefore pray inform me of the one, whilst I admire at the other.

Mir. Sir, your Stile is very courtly, and more perhaps than the Subject deserves; but I esteem it as it is, a Compliment; tho' to answer you plainly who I am, be assur'd I am a Woman of no mean Fortune or Extraction—and what I am you may judge:—I am your Prisoner at present—So leave you to determine.

Afp. That you may do presently, Sir, Look but a little nearer to her—Notwithstanding she's so beautiful, I warrant she has cloven Feet underneath.

Col. Impudent Blockhead be gone! [Strikes him.

Afp. With all my Heart; for I never was so weary of my Company before. [Exit.

Col. Now, Madam, shall I have the Happiness to know your Name.

Mir. Let what I have told you suffice at present: Be like a Soldier of Honour, trust me upon my Parole, and you shall hear farther from me in Half an Hour. Be satisfy'd I am a Woman of Reputation, tho' my present Conduct may have brought it into Suspicion, and I expect you wou'd treat me as becomes a Gentleman, and one whom I esteem, as you may suppose.

Col. Nay, nay, my Dear; now I find you are a Mortal

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 49

tal I shan't part with you, but upon very advantageous Conditions.

Mir. Then I am lost again—O for a Stratagem!—Now all the Invention, Craft, Subtilty of my Sex assist—Sir, I beg you to release me now, and in Requital of your Generosity, come but into the Piazza of Covent-Garden in Half an Hour, there shall a Chair wait for you, and bring you where I dare own my self with Honour, and, I hope, to both our Satisfactions.

Col. Pardon me, Madam; I dare not take your Word; that wou'd be like venturing all my Treasure to Sea in a Storm.

Mir. What do you intend to do with me, Sir?

Col. To love you.

Mir. And not obey me!

Col. Obedience in a Lover is as Romantic as Constancy. Besides, I know you are a Woman of more Sense, than to expect it in such an Affair as this.

Mir. Stratagem is the peculiar Wisdom of our Sex: But to answer you in your own Profession, since you refuse to admit of a Truce, I must take other Methods, and compel you to it. Behold this Mark upon my Hand, and then detain me if you can. [Takes a

Pinch of Snuff out of her Box secretly. She holds up her Hand, he comes to look at it, she blows the Snuff in his Eyes, he stamps, drops the Lanthorn, which she takes up, turns the dark Side, and escapes thro' the secret Place.

Col. Zoons! She has put my Eyes out. *Aspin,* Light quickly, a Light you Dog!

Enter *Aspin* with a Candle.

Asp. So, I thought what it wou'd come to—is the Fairy gone, Sir?

Col. Gone! yes; and has almost blinded me with blowing Snuff in my Eyes.

Asp. No, no Master: I warrant you it was Brimstone.

Col. Did not you meet her?

Asp. If I did, it was invisible: but I believe I might; for as I was coming hastily in, the Candle had like to have been blown out, and I believe it was she whisking by me in a Whirlwind.

50 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Col. Twice together to be out-witted thus.

Asp. What better can you expect by keeping such Diabolical Company?

Col. We are in a Dream sure, and Fancy plagues us with a fantastick Form.

Asp. As to its being fantastick, 'tis the Form of a Woman, and therefore no Wonder; but I believe we shall be the first that ever dreamt when we were broad awake.

Col. What's here? [Takes the Letter off the Table.

Reads,

Sir, I begin to be tir'd with the Pranks I have play'd you; therefore lest I should bring my Honour into Suspicion, I think it Time to discover my self. If you will be in the Piazza in Covent-Garden this Evening, there shall be a Chair.

But what shou'd follow?—Why certainly what she told me—This Intrigue, the nigher it draws to a Discovery, appears the more Intricate. I'll venture however, and never give over till I have dissolv'd this Charm.

Like Woman, I'll invent, till Means are found,
With equal Craft this Riddle to expound. [Exeunt.

The End of the Third ACT.



ACT IV.

Enter Lady Outside, and Miranda, perusing a Letter.

Mir. OW excellent is the Stile! such soft, such easie Language! as if the Quill that wrote it had been pluck'd from Cupid's Wing.



Wid. But prithee, dear Miranda, what do you design to do with this Colonel?

Mir. Why, I intend after teizing him a little more, to discover my self to him.

Wid.

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Wid. What do you mean by that?

Mir. Why, he's a Man of more Wit than to be impo'd on so much longer ; therefore I had rather the Discovery shou'd be owing to my Generosity, than his Genius. Besides, the Design begins to have so little Variety in it, that it's no longer agreeable ; and tho' I was fond of it at first, as our Sex is of a new Fashion ; so after two or three Times, the Delight of it is gone, and now I'd bring it to a Conclusion.

Wid. If an Amour grows disagreeable, what will a Husband do ?

Mir. Perhaps the same : Tho' the Variety of our Tempers may take off the dull Notes of Matrimony. But, Madam, I want to have a little serious Discourse with you ; I wou'd very fain make a Sister-in-Law of you.

Wid. Sure you take me to be as mad as your self.

Mir. Why not ?—Come, I'll venture first into the Road of Matrimony, and then it will be easie for you to follow my Tracks.

Wid. Whether the Colonel will have you, or no ?

Mir. I'd fain see a handsom Fellow of his Wit and Station, that wou'd refuse a pretty young Lady with a good Fortune ; but if you wou'd not have me beat the Path for you, I'll take Care when my Brother comes next, that you shall do it for me.

Ester Courtwell.

And here he comes, in the critical Minute too, I hope. Brother, I have been pleading your Cause to my Lady Outside ; but I'm afraid I shan't prove a successful Advocate, considering a younger Brother's my Client, and a rich Widow the Judge : Fortune is grown the best Orator in Love.

Court. You are in the right, Sister : Jointure and Pin-Money have clearly got the better of Merit and Affection ; but I'll never repine at that ; for fine Women, like great Tables, tho' they are maintain'd by Men of Fortunes, are ever open to Men of Parts.

Wid. The Women are ever sure of your good Word, Mr. Courtwell ; when you have a Mistress, I hope she'll deserve it from you in particular, and have in Perfection

50 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Col. Twice together to be out-witted thus.

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Reads,

Sir, I begin to be tir'd with the Pranks I have play'd you; therefore lest I should bring my Honour into Suspicion, I think it Time to discover my self. If you will be in the Piazza in Covent-Garden this Evening, there shall be a Chair.

But what shou'd follow?—Why certainly what she told me—This Intrigue, the nigher it draws to a Discovery, appears the more Intricate. I'll venture however, and never give over till I have dissolv'd this Charm.

Like Woman, I'll invent, till Means are found,
With equal Craft this Riddle to expound. [Exeunt.

The End of the Third ACT.



ACT IV.

Enter Lady Outside, and Miranda, perusing a Letter.

Mir.



OW excellent is the Stile! such soft, such easie Language! as if the Quill that wrote it had been pluck'd from Cupid's Wing.

Wid. But prithee, dear Miranda, what do you design to do with this Colonel?

Mir. Why, I intend after teizing him a little more, to discover my self to him.

Wid.

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Wid. What do you mean by that?

Mir. Why, he's a Man of more Wit than to be imposs'd on so much longer; therefore I had rather the Discovery shou'd be owing to my Generosity, than his Genius. Besides, the Design begins to have so little Variety in it, that it's no longer agreeable; and tho' I was fond of it at first, as our Sex is of a new Fashion; so after two or three Times, the Delight of it is gone, and now I'd bring it to a Conclusion.

Wid. If an Amour grows disagreeable, what will a Husband do?

Mir. Perhaps the same: Tho' the Variety of our Tempers may take off the dull Notes of Matrimony. But, Madam, I want to have a little serious Discourse with you; I wou'd very fain make a Sister-in-Law of you.

Wid. Sure you take me to be as mad as your self.

Mir. Why not?—Come, I'll venture first into the Road of Matrimony, and then it will be easie for you to follow my Tracks.

Wid. Whether the Colonel will have you, or no?

Mir. I'd fain see a handsom Fellow of his Wit and Station, that wou'd refuse a pretty young Lady with a good Fortune; but if you wou'd not have me beat the Path for you, I'll take Care when my Brother comes next, that you shall do it for me.

Ester Courtwell.

And here he comes, in the critical Minute too, I hope. Brother, I have been pleading your Cause to my Lady *Outside*; but I'm afraid I shan't prove a successful Advocate, considering a younger Brother's my Client, and a rich Widow the Judge: Fortune is grown the best Orator in Love.

Court. You are in the right, Sister: Jointure and Pin-Money have clearly got the better of Merit and Affection; but I'll never repine at that; for fine Women, like great Tables, tho' they are maintain'd by Men of Fortunes, are ever open to Men of Parts.

Wid. The Women are ever sure of your good Word, Mr. Courtwell; when you have a Mistress, I hope she'll deserve it from you in particular, and have in Perfection

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all those good Qualities you so liberally bestow upon the whole Sex in your Discourses.

Court. Why, Madam, I thought you had understood Raillery better; this is only the Way of Talking I have got among my Companions, where, when we meet over a Bottle, 'tis held as great a Part of Wit to rally Women handsomely behind their Backs, as to flatter them to their Faces.

Mir. I find 'tis Time for me to withdraw. In these Sort of Engagements, a third Person is wholly unnecessary.

[Exit.]

Wid. But why do you make us poor Women the Subject of your Mirth? Why are we so barbarously treated by you?

Court. Because you are so uncharitable, so hard-hearted, and are encompass'd with so many Difficulties, as Decency, Honour, and Reputation, that the Men that love their Pleasure, begin to hate you worse than Beggars do a Coach with the Glasses drawn up, despair of Relief, and fall a Railing.

Wid. But pray Mr. *Courtwell*, to what kind Saint do we owe your Conversion?

Court. You are very forgetful sure: How often have my Eyes told you, when my Tongue durst not, the Pains you gave my Heart: Need I tell you any more, 'tis your fair self I love. I have lost the Pleasure of Mirth, of Wine, and Company, all Things that were before delightful to me, are no longer so. My Life is grown but one continu'd Thought of your fair self?

Wid. Come, leave your Fooling. I think your old Humour does better with you a thousand Times than this whining Love?

Court. Why here 'tis now, there are so many Cheats in this Trade of Love too, that, like Beggars, the true go unreliev'd, because we meet with now and then a Counterfeit; but faith Madam I wou'd not trouble you, you'd my Pain admit of Redress from any but your self.

Wid. Sure, Mr. *Courtwell*, you wou'd think I had an excellent Opinion of my self, or an implicit Faith in whatever you say, shou'd I believe all this now.

Court.

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Court. If I told a Surgeon I had broke my Leg, d'you think he wou'd not take my Word?

Wid. Yes sure.

Court. Why shou'd not you take it then for a wounded Heart? They are neither of 'em Matters to brag of; and I wou'd no more lead the Life of a Lover if I were free, than I wou'd that of a sick Man if I were well.

Wid. Methinks the sick Men, as you call them, look so like the well, that one can scarce know one from the other.

Court. In your Chamber perhaps; but abroad we find a thousand Differences.

Wid. As how I pray?

Court. Why your true Lover leaves all Company when the Mirth begins, the Table when the Bottles are call'd for, the Gaming-House when the Cards come up; is more afraid of an Engagement than a Lawyer in Term-Time; wou'd less miss the last Act of a Play, the Park, or indeed, any abominable old Lady's, where he may hope to see the Party, than a Citizen's young Daughter wou'd *Gray's-Inn-Walks* the first Sunday of her new Gown.

Wid. And will you be such an Animal for my sake?

Court. Faith I am already; but if not well us'd, I shall find the way home again.

Wid. Whatever you think, Sir, I shall contribute no more to the keeping you my Servant, than I did to the making you so.

Court. Well, do but use as proper Means to keep me your Servant, as you did to make me so, and I am satisfy'd.

Wid. Why, what Means?

Court. As your Beauty bred my Affection, so let your Kindness nourish it.

Wid. Why, I am tender-hearted, Courtwell; but then you have been such an inconstant—

Court. Oh Madam, your right Lover, like your true bred Spaniel, will range; 'tis only a Proof of his high Mettle; but when his lawful Game's before him, down, down—

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Wid. Ay, down—down—indeed, when his law-
ful Game's before him; but in my Opinion, that's nor
so commendable a Quality in a Lover, whatever it be in
a Spaniel.

Court. O what untoward Suspicions these Widows
have.

Wid. But let me see, what may I expect if I consent
to be your Wife?—I must board half a Year with a
Friend in the Country, tumble about the other half in
most villainous Hackneys, see you when you have no
Money to play, and then be kiss'd out of a Ring or a
Bracelet.

Court. I wou'd not use a City-Widow of Five and
Fifty so, with Seven small Children: Do but Consent,
Madam, and I'll this Minute send for a Parson and a Li-
cense, for fear you shou'd change your Resolution.

Wid. Hold, hold, *Courtwell*—My Heart fails me.

Court. Sheart, I had a Qualm two: There's certain-
ly a more than ordinary Providence attends me—I shall
scape yet: I am now in a Twitter, like a Gamester up-
on a great Bet, that is heartily afraid he should lose it,
and yet his Love to the Money won't suffer him to draw
Stakes—Well, I must have her.

Wid. Indeed you won't—I have consider'd better
won't—Your humble Servant. [Exit.]

Court. Heyday! Certainly there's nothing in the Cre-
ation so fantastical as a Woman—There's no Hopes of
Success, I find, by a regular Siege, so I'll e'en employ
my Force another way, and take the Citadel by Sur-
prise; and here comes one that may be a very proper
Instrument, I must endeavour to bribe her to my Inter-
est: In these Cases, there's nothing like a Friend with-
in the Walls.

Enter Necessary.

Nec. I ask your Pardon, Sir, I thought my Lady had
been here. [Going.]

Court. Hold, pretty Mrs. Necessary—I must have a
Word or two with you.

Nec. I shou'd be glad to do you any Pleasure, and
shall always be ready whenever you please to make use
of me.

Court.

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Court. Faith, my Dear, you are very pretty, [Kisses her.] 'Sdeath how wantonly her Eyes talk? [Aside.]

Nec. Lard, you are the strangest Man—Is this all your Business?

Court. No, my Dear, I want to have a little Discourse with you about your Lady.

Nec. Look you, Sir, Lawyers and Chamber-Maids, like Balaam's Ass, never speak unless they see an Angel.

Court. Wisely observ'd. There's your Fee. [Gives her Money.]

Nec. Ay, marry, Sir, this is somewhat, but to plead a Cause in *Forma Pauperis*, is the Devil.

Court. Well, Mrs. Necessary, I must have your Assistance this Night in a Design which I have laid to carry your Lady; in which, if I succeed, I'll make those two Guineas two hundred.

Nec. Ay, marry Sir, this is bidding like a Gentleman indeed; you may depend upon my Assistance: Two hundred such Angels as these will tempt a Woman even to keep a Secret—Well, you Men are strange Creatures when you are set upon a Thing; you stick at nothing to compass your Design; Lying, Perjury, Bribery, and what not—Nay, o'my Conscience, I believe you'd raise the Devil to obtain a Circle. [A Bell rings.] Hark, my Lady rings! I can't stay to consult with you now.

Court. Meet me below Stairs a quarter of an Hour hence.

Nec. I will, I will. Farewell. [Exeunt severally.]

SCENE Covent-Garden.

Enter Col. Manly.

Col. I am afraid my little Riddle has jilted me again: I have waited this half Hour, and no Appearance of a Chair.

Enter two Chair-Men with a Chair.

Chair. Hift! hift! If your Name be *Manly*, get into this Chair, and ask no farther Questions.

Col. Now certainly the Discovery draws near. I wish at last the Riddle proves worth the Trouble of expounding. Certainly she can't be a common Woman, by the

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the Caution she takes of preserving her Reputation. Well, for once I'll indulge my Curiosity; tho' it bring me to an old Woman, or what's e'en as bad, an old Acquaintance.

[Gets in.]

Chair. Push on, Jack, push on. [Exeunt with Chair.]

SCENE a Chamber.

Enter Sir Amorous Vainwit, reading a Letter.

Sir Amo. Rivet me to the Center, if this is not superlatively fortunate; I cou'd contemplate on these Lines to Perpetuity.

Reads,

Sir, I am confirm'd you have Wit and Good-Nature enough to forgive this uncommon Method I have taken to divulge my Passion; the Effect of your own Charms, which I think as impossible for any Woman to see, and not admire, as to love you, and not declare it. The Condition I am in makes me thus free: I am a Woman of a considerable Fortune, and in my own Hands; but have a Brother who takes the Privilege of his Sex to confine me, being of a Nature so jealous, that he believes Virtue can not guard it self. I have said enough to let you know I should be glad of my Freedom, which I doubt not but your Wit can easily effect; and if you think my Person and Fortune a Reward, you may trust to your own Charms for your Security. If you will go immediately into the Piazza, there shall be a Chair to conduct you to me. Yours,

SILVIA.

This is an Intrigue indeed, and worth the following— Egad the Women are strangely taken with this Person of mine. I believe I must marry at last in my own Defence—Sirrah, if I am not at Home by Twelve, you need not expect me. Now for Silvia.

SCENE Miranda's Chamber.

Enter Betty, leading in Col. Manly.

Bet. Stay here a while, and I, or better Company will wait on you immediately.

[Exit. Col.]

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Col. So, I have travell'd a fine Way to Night, thro' all the Allies, Lanes, and By-ways in Town—I am brought here to wait on my little Fairy, and for ought I know I may be in the World in the Moon, only Darkness seems a Contradiction to that—Pray Heav'n, where ever I am, it may prove an Orb of Happiness, and that this Adventure may end as well as it begun, in a pleasant Intrigue with a fair young Lady. [Singing within.] What do I hear?—Nay, now I believe I am in a Region among the Deities indeed, and this Musick is a Preparation for the thrilling Pleasures I am brought here to enjoy—Methinks they stay too long—Now am I flush'd with Expectation of my approaching Bliss—I dare not peep, for fear of being expell'd my Eden for searching after too much Knowledge—Soft a little! the dark Scene of Mortality opens, and my charming Spirit appears in her little Paradise.

Enter Miranda and Betty with Candles.
So! in what Syllables shall I accost her? What a Pox! Have I ne'er a Speech out of a Play to complement her? Then her Beauty must inspire me with some *Extempore Poetry* I think: or if you like not to assist me in this
Mir. Is not your Patience tir'd, Sir?

Col. No, Madam:

As Rural Swains expecting wait the Dawn,
And view with Gladness the approaching Morn;
So at your Radiant Charms, inspir'd I gaze,
Bear'd by your Eyes, like bright Aurora's Rays.

Mir. Sir, instead of returning so courtly a Complement in the same Poetick Strain, I have at present so little of the Vanity of my Sex, as to be offend'd at your Flattery; for you have neither the Constancy of a Rural Swain, nor my Eyes the Brightness of Aurora's Rays; therefore your Words speak rather the Panegyrick of a Poet, than the Plain-dealing of a Soldier.

Col. Madam, what I have said is Truth, and therefore no Flattery; and as for my Constancy, I have had a continual Fit of it ever since I saw you; and for your Charms, they are brighter than Aurora in my Eyes, and I

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I am as little skill'd in the Art of Flattery, as your Beauty is above the Reach of it.

Mir. Nay, now your Genius soars so high, that I assure you my humble Wit cannot come up to it with an Answer.

Col. Nor mine, Madam, to return your Raillery at present, but pray what Usage am I to expect?

Mir. The same which you intended half an Hour ago for me, Sir.

Col. Faith, with all my Heart, Madam: I am glad to hear it. Come let's retire then. [Knocking without.]

Mir. I am betray'd! 'tis my Brother—Sir, I beg you'd hide your self or I'm undone.

Col. Hide my self! yes truly, 'tis very likely I shou'd and not know where I am—A Pox on my unlucky Fortune.

Mir. Hark! they knock again!—Betty, conduct him to my Closet in my Dressing-Room. [Ex. Betty and Col. So, now he's gone, I'm safe—Well, an Intrigue requires as much Policy to keep it from being found out, as a Conspiracy: The least contrary Motion disorders the whole Frame of it, and brings it to the very Brink of Discovery.

Enter Sir Amorous and Betty.

Betty. This is my Lady, Sir.

Sir Amo. Strike me crooked if she is not a most Angelick Creature. Madam, may I have Leave to hope these Lines were wrote by the fair Hands of so superlative a Beauty? He! Madam.

Mir. Sir, they were—and I hope you will interpret—Be pleas'd to sit—I say Sir—

Sir Amo. Madam!

Mir. I say Sir, my Conduct in this Affair may prejudice my Reputation in your Opinion: Therefore my present Task must be to justify that, before I can pretend to a Place in the Heart of so accomplish'd a Gentleman; which, I must with blushing own, I shou'd esteem my greatest Happiness.

Sir Amo. O Gad, Madam, you confound me with your supererogatory Indulgence; tho', at the same Time, I must say, your Manner of Proceeding is very Novel; but

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but had my Eyes before this Time been blest with the benign Prospect of your invincible Charms, your Beauty wou'd not have only sav'd your Blushes upon this Occasion, but inspir'd my Tongue with all the Efficacy of moving Eloquence to beg with Importunity the proffer'd Blessing.

Mir. I thank you, for your kind Indulgence of my Passion: even Flattery in Love is welcome: But, Sir, that my Reputation is yet unsully'd, let this declare: I am a Widow, my Husband was an *India Merchant*, where, about three Years since, he dy'd, but not before he had acquir'd an Estate of Two Thousand Pounds a Year, of which he left me sole Mistress, with the Addition of Fifteen Thousand Pounds; the strong Affection I had for my Native Country, soon after my Husband's Death, brought me to *England*, where, ever since, my Brother has usurp'd a Power of confining me, making this House my Prison, under a Pretence to prevent my marrying to a Disadvantage; but rather, I believe (by his barbarous Usage) to drive me into Despair, that he may the easier become Master of my Fortune: He is so jealous of me, that it wou'd be immediate Death for any Man to look at me with the least Desire of any farther Intimacy.

Sir Amo. I hope, Madam, he's not in the House now—Not that I shou'd fear an Army of Brothers in such a Cause—Your Beauty wou'd give Success to my Endeavours, and egad, Madam, I fence as well as any Man in *Europe*.

Mir. No, Sir, he's out of Town, and won't come Home to Night: My Servant he has made my Keeper; but I have brib'd her to my Interest—Now, Sir, give me leave to proceed, for Time is precious, and my Desire of Liberty gives my Tongue this Boldness—I saw you on *Sunday* at St. *James's Church*, when your Charms, like subtle Lightning flasht thro' my Eyes, and took Possession of my Heart; ever since I have been contriving to make known my Passion to you, and obtain a happy Interview; which, by the Force of my own Inclination, and my Servant's Avarice, I have this Night accomplish'd—Your Manner of being brought here

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here was merely Political, that if you refus'd my melting Heart its Wishes, my Reputation might be safe, and you return'd the same Way you came.

Sir Amo. Egad she'd make an excellent City Wife— one wou'd think she had been brought up in Spain or Portugal by her secure Manner of Intriguing. *[Aside.]*

Mir. Now, Sir, if you think me worthy to be your Wife (I must speak it) procure me my Liberty this Night; I have both a License and a Parson ready in the House, and my Maids will be Witnesses.

Sir Amo. This is something extraordinary. She may be a Bete faith. *[Aside.]* Why really, Madam, Marriage is a Thing I have not much thought of as yet; not but that I shou'd conclude my self infinitely happy in the Possession of so fine a Woman—But—

Mir. Come, Sir, perhaps you may think this some Imposition on you, but I'll quickly remove that doubt— There, Sir, accept these Bills: they are from the Bank, and worth Ten Thousand Pounds, only an Earnest of the Fortune you may command. *[Gives him Bills.]*

Sir Amo. Ha! egad they're right. Pray Heav'n this mayn't prove a Dream at last. Faith I can hardly credit my Senses. *[Aside.]*

Mir. You seem surpriz'd, Sir. What new Objection?

Sir Amo. Objection, Madam! none cou'd be excogitated after so consummate a Proof of Love and Merit; and if any Disorder is perceptible in my Looks, it proceeds from a pusillanimous Apprehension of any cross Accident that a malevolent Fate shou'd produce, to exclude me from the Heaven of your Embraces.

Mir. Then Sir, be pleas'd to secure them Bills in your Pocket-Book. *[Putting the Bills in his Book.]*

Sir Amo. This is a most prodigious Adventure, and notwithstanding all my Vanity and Boasting, I never knew any Woman before that had Sense enough to be commonly civil to me: Therefore I'll take Fortune by the Hand while she's in this smiling Humour, marry the Lady this Minute, and publish my Success over the whole Town before to morrow Morning—Her Fortune I am sure of, her Beauty is invincible, and her Understanding is conspicuous, in chusing me for a Husband—

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band—Dear Charmier, you must indulge the Importunity of a Passion, which the Corruption of your own fair Eyes have created, and your melifluous Tongue confirm'd: You must consent to make me happy this Night! this Hour! this Minute! My Soul pants for the Exstatick Bliss.

Mir. This Rapture blows my Passion to a Flame; your Words are no less charming to my Ears, than your Beauty to my Eyes.

Enter Betty.

Betty. O Madam! Madam! my Master's come to Town, and just coming up Stairs.

Mir. My Brother! O Heav'n! what an unlucky Accident's this? What will you do, Sir?

Sir Amo. Lord, Madam, I am the dullest Dog at contriving in the World—but, if you please, Madam, I'll jump out at the Window.

Mir. That were to endanger your precious Life—
Betty step into the Closer, there is a Night-Gown and Petticoat of mine, fetch it out, and put it upon him—
[Exit *Betty.*] You must consent to this Disguise, for if my Brother sees you, you're certainly a dead Man.

Enter Betty with the Cloaths.

Betty. Here, Sir, be pleas'd to put on the Petticoat.

[Dresses him.]

Sir Amo. Sure I am the most unlucky Dog upon the Earth! I am damnably afraid my good Fortune will conclude in a Gudgelling.

Betty. So, Sir, now the Gown.

Sir Amo. Well, I was never made for intriguing, that's certain. I have neither a Head to contrive an Escape, nor a Heart to justify a Discovery: Nay, what vexes me most, I am so cursed a Coward, that I am not to be kick'd into a little Courage.

Betty. Now, Sir, for the Headcloaths. I vow you'll make a pretty Sort of a Lass.

Mir. Hark! I hear my Brother coming. Say any Thing to bring your self off.

Enter the Butler dress'd like a Gentleman, booted.

But. So, Sister, have you supp'd?

Mir. No, Brother; nor I have not order'd any Thing,

F

because

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because you told me you shou'd stay at Hampton-Court all Night.

But. So I had, but Sir John and his Brother sent an Excuse for their not coming, so I e'en came Home to Night. How now! who is this Woman?

Sir Amo. Sir, I came about a little Business to my young Lady.

But. No Person can have Business with my Sister, who does not think fit to acquaint me with it. What are you, Woman?

Sir Amo. Pray Sir don't be in a Passion. I am—I am, you must know I don't know what the Devil to say to him. My Fear puts a Stop to my wonted Capacity of Lying. [Aside.]

But. I ask you, Woman, what you are?

Sir Amo. Why Sir, I am a Midwife.

But. A Midwife! what Business can my Sister have with a Midwife?

Sir Amo. O Lord! that's true—What a damnable Thought was that? I might as well have said I was a Fish Wife—I shall certainly be discover'd. [Aside.]

But. A Midwife! impossible! But Zoons, tell me what you are, or—

Sir Amo. O dear Sir, you'll put me into Fits if you storm at this rate;—but exacuteate me Sir if—

But. Exacuteate the Devil—

Sir Amo. Upon the Veracity of a Gentleman—Woman, I am really and categorically a Midwife.

But. A Midwife! no, rather one to prepare Work for a Midwife, a Pimp, a Pander! O Sister, Sister, is this the Care you have of your Honour? Do Women use to wear Mens Shoes? But I'll reward this Messenger of Lewdness!— [Beats him.]

Sir Amo. O help! Murder! Murder! Is this Usage for a Gentleman—Help! help! the Devil take the hindmost. [Runs off.]

Mir. Ha, ha, ha! This is a pretty severe Punishment upon the Fool. I assure you Tom, you have perform'd your Part very well.

But. Your humble Servant, Madam. I am glad it was in my Power to serve you; but indeed, to tell you the

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the Truth, Madam, I always go about Mischief with a good Will—My Father was a Pettyfogger, and I have a natural Inclination to it.

Mir. Betty, you must go into the next Room, and pursue the Adventure, while I prepare Clarinda for the Marriage.

[Exeunt.]

Enter Sir Amorous in the Balcony.

Sir Amo. So, I have at last found out a Balcony—Ha! 'tis to the Street; that's fortunate enough—I'll e'en take a Leap in the Dark, and so happy be lucky say I. [Leaps out, and hangs upon a Hook, by his Petticoats.] Gadso! what now?—Sdeath I'm fasten'd to a Hook, and can't reach the Balcony to free my self.

Enter Betty in the Balcony.

Betty. Sure his Fear has not carry'd him out of the Balcony head foremost! Ha! by all that's mischievous our unfortunate Knight-Errant, is hung fast by the Petticoat—He's safe enough for one while. Now does my good Nature incline me to improve this Accident for my Lady's Diversion; I must send Tom to him once more.

[Exit.]

Sir Amo. Sure some malevolent Star reign'd at my Nativity! What a Disappointment have I met with to Night, to be hung up by the Middle like the Sign of the Fleece—if I shou'd be discover'd in this unfortunate Situation of my Affairs, I shou'd become the Scorn of the Ladies, and the Jeit of the whole Town.

Enter the Butler, and a Footman with a Flambeaux, who stands just under Sir Amorous.

Ha! the Door opens! What will become of thee, poor Sir Amorous.

But [Speaking to some within.] Besure secure all the Windows—I'll lock this Door, and take the Key with me—Ha! there's something in the Keyhole.

Sir Amo. O this Son of a Whore will roast me alive with his damn'd Flambeaux.

But. So, 'tis lock'd at last, light to the Mitre.

[Exeunt.]

Sir Amo. To the Devil I hope—Egad I'm glad they're gone; I must have squeak'd for my Life if that Rogue had stood there much longer.

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Enter Betty in the Balcony.

Betty. I have search'd all the Rooms and can't find him : He certainly must have leap'd this Balcony—My poor Mistres will run distracted.

Sir Amo. O my Dear art thou there ? Prithee excogitate some Method to relieve me, for I am unfortunately hung here between Heaven and Earth.

Betty. Bless my Heart ! you frightened me. What, are you fastned ?

Sir Amo. Fastned ! Yes, yes, I am fastned, like a Monkey, by the Loins.

Betty. Here, Sir, lay hold on the End of this Handkerchief, and I'll endeavour to pull you up, till you can catch hold of the Bannisters. [She pulls him up.

Sir Amo. Hoa up !—so, I have got Footing again, tho' I cannot say upon safe Ground.

Betty. My Mistres will be overjoy'd to see you Sir — and now there is no Fear of her Brother—He'll be engag'd for two or three Hours at least, and by that Time you may be marry'd, and out of the Reach of his Resentment.

Sir Amo. Dear Child, I am eternally oblig'd to thee, and I hope this Intrigue will end more fortunately than it begun. [Exeunt.

The End of the Fourth ACT.



ACT V. SCENE a Chamber.

Enter Miranda, Sir Amorous in Women's Cloaths, follow'd by Betty.

Mir. E A R Sir Amorous, 'tis impossible for Imagination to conceive the Concern I have been under for your unfortunate Discovery, which might have depriv'd me of the most valuable Blessing of my Life.

Sir Amo. But now, Madam, that obnoxious opaque Cloud is dissipated, and Fortune once



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Once more has plac'd us under the Sun-shine of Opportunity, we ought to make the most judicious Advantage of it we can.

Bet. I think, Madam, the Gentleman intimates very wisely, I have got a License in my Pocket, and a Parson in the Pantry: What hinders now but that you prepare for a short Grace, and fall too while your Stomachs are in good Humour: When the Business is once over, you may bid Defiance to all Brothers.

Mir. I have no other Way to make Reparation for your Sufferings to Night: *Betty*, you may bring Sir Amorous his Cloaths. [Exit *Betty*.] How I blush to think my Necessity shou'd oblige me to conceal so fine a Gentleman under so mean a Disguise—

Sir Amo. Oh Madam! Love has occasion'd a Thousand such Metamorphosis; *Achilles* obscur'd his Valour under a Petticoat, for the Love of a fair Mistress. The Mighty *Hercules* once put on an Apron, and for Love was whipt at a Spinning-Wheel—*Jupiter* himself has submitted to Disguises for to carry on his Amours.

Enter Betty with Sir Amorous's Cloaths.

Bet. Come, Sir, strip, strip—and put on your own Cloaths. I have given the Doctor Notice, his Pipe and his Bottle are just out, and he'll be ready for you in an Instant. [He pulls off the Women's Cloaths, and just as he's in his Shirt, the Butler breaks open the Door and enters.

Sir Amo. Dear Mistress *Betty*, I will make you a grateful Acknowledgment for your Trouble—Ha! What the Devil's here?

But. O vile Wretch! Have you got your Paramour with you again? Ha! and naked too! O thou vile Prostitute!—But thus I'll revenge my injur'd Honour.

Mir. holding him. Oh, pray Sir, recal this dreadful Resolution, and hear me speak.

Sir Am. looking about. No Loophole to escape at—egad I'll try if I can climb a Chimney. [Runs up the Chimney.

But. Ha! Are you so nimble? I may chance to fetch you down before you get to your Journey's End, as expeditious as you are—Here, *Peter*, bring me my great Gun—I'll send a leaden Argument or two after

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you to perswade you to return : Why Peter, I say, bring me my great Gun. [Looking up the Chimney.]

Sir Amo. in the Chimney.] Oh ! for Heav'ns sake countermand the Man with the great Gun, and I'll surrender at Discretion.

But. Quickly come down then, or I fire after you at once. [Still peeps.]

Sir Amo. Oh, hold your Hand, and I'm with you in an Instant. Odso ! I have almost broke my Legs.

[Tumbles down the Chimney all black.]

But. Now, Sir, what can you say to justify or excuse your villainous Design upon the Honour of my Family.

Sir Amo. Really, Sir, I am at present under such a Confusion, that I know not well how to exhibit a proper Answer to your Accusation ; but when you know my Name and Quality, I doubt not but you'll think more favourable of my Designs.

But. Pray, Sir, make me acquainted with 'em both, and quickly too, or—

Sir Amo. My Name is Amorous Vainwit, Knight, I have a good Estate in the County of Surrey, which, with the Affection I bear your Sister, may render me worthy your Favour—And I assure you, Sir, my Intentions are honourable.

But. That will admit of a Doubt ; but if you are honourable, you may stand any Trial : You must excuse me, if, after what I have seen, I can't credit your Narration, but must defer your Examination 'till to Morrow Morning—In the mean Time, you must be contented to remain a Prisoner in this Room—Madam, I command you to your Chamber—These Cloaths I must secure 'till Morning—Betty, put out all the Lights in the House, and go immediately to Bed, the Key of this Room I shall secure in my Pocket—

[Exeunt with the Lights all but Sir Amo.]

Sir Amo. Oh ! Misfortune unparalell'd—Why, this is infinitely worse than being hung by the Loins at a Balcony : Rivet me to the Centre, if ever I was so embarrass'd since my first Entrance into humane Nature ; I must certainly be in a cursed Condition ; well, 'tis a Happiness I am left to console my Misfortune in the Dark,

W O M A N i s a R I D D L E . 67

Dark, for a Candle and a Looking-Glass in the Room,
would be present Death.

Enter Betty with an old red Wastcoat, and Sir

Amorous's Wig, leading in Clarinda.

Hark ! I hear the Door unlock, some Comfort, Fortune,
I beseech thee.

Bet. Sir Amorous ! Sir Amorous !

Sir Amo. Ay, here I am, almost starv'd to Death with
Cold.

Bet. I consider'd your Condition, and have brought
you an old Wastcoat that belongs to one of the Foot-
men, and your Wig, which my Master dropt upon the
Stairs.

[She puts them on.]

Sir Amo. This is an Obligation I can never return;
but how got you in ?

Bet. Why, the Key of my Chamber-Door fitted this
Lock ; here is my Lady with me—Speak to him,
Madam.

[Aside to Clarinda.]

Clar. You may see, Sir, what Difficulties true Love
dare encounter with—We'll yet be happy in Spight of
Fortune and my Brother ; the Parson is still below
Stairs, and may do his Office ; you must dispense with
its being perform'd in the Dark, since you are acquaint-
ed with the Necessity.

Sir Amo. Oh, Madam, there needs no Light where
you are, the radiant Lustre of your Eyes would eclipse
the Sun.

Bet. Come, come Sir, and Madam, defer these fine
Speeches till a better Opportunity—and go and talk
with the Parson. So now for the Colonel. *[Unlocks
the Closet Door, pushes 'em both in.]* I must remove him
a little farther off for the Present, I think I had as good
bestow him in his own Lodging till this Wedding is o-
ver—Sir, Sir—*[Enter Colonel]* give me your Hand,
and follow me.

Col. This is a pretty Scene of Enchantment, where
the Devil can this all End—*[She leads him out.]*

SCENE Changes to Col. Manly's Lodgings.

Enter thorough the private Door Betty leading the Colonel.

Bet. Stay here Sir, till I come to you *[Exit the same way]*
Col.

68 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Col. This is the oddest Adventure I ever met with, I suppose by and by I shall feel the Point of some jealous Cuckold's Sword at my Throat.

Enter Aspin drunk.

Asp. This Citron-Water is admirable Stuff; I have slept the Fire and Candle out; and I presume my Master will hardly come home to Night, therefore I'll e'en grope my Way to his Bedchamber, and take a Nap 'till Morning.

Col. I think I hear some Body; I hope 'tis my little Emiliary to conduct me back to the Lady.

Asp. As a Proof of my Courage, I can venture into this Room that's haunted, and without a Light too; for since I have arm'd my self with *Richard Baxter's* Dram of Comfort to a faint-hearted Sinner, I can bully the Devil.—

Col. Oh, 'tis she—are you come, my Dear, I have waited with no small Impatience—

Asp. Oh, Lord, there's a Voice—and all my Resolution is vanish'd at once: If I had but Courage now, wou'd I speak to this Spirit, perhaps here is some Money hid, and it can't rest 'till it be discover'd.

Col. Where are you, my Dear—*Feels about, lays hold on Aspin, then starts back, and draws his Sword.* Damme, what's here, a Man?

Asp. Oh! how my Heart akes, this is certainly a Thief, I'll e'en put my Conduct upon tryal, for I dare not trust to my Courage.

Col. What are you? Speak this Minute, or my Sword's in your Guts;—Inform me what House this is, and who's the Master of it; but speak softly, least we are over-heard.

Asp. Ay, ay, 'tis certainly a Thief; my Courage does really fail me, and I must frighten him by Stratagem—the Master of this House is the Devil, he keeps Company with the Lady *Fairy*, and I am their chief Butler.

Col. What a-pox, have they thrust me into a dark Room with a Madman?—I'll humour him a little—Prithee what's thy Master's Name?

Asp. He is vulgarly distinguish'd by the Title of *Colonel Manly.*

Col.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 69

Col. The Devil he is—*Aspin.*

Afp. That's my Name—Master is it you? Why how came you here?

Col. Nay, if you go to that, What Art Magick brought you here? Did you follow my Chair, and slip into this Apartment to hide yourself?

Afp. Follow your Chair! My poor Master has been Drinking I perceive: Pray Sir, which way did you return here since you went out?

Col. Why, you are drunk you Rascal!

Afp. Poor Man, he's prodigiously overtaken—but pray, Sir, which way did you come in? I'm sure I had the Key of the Room in my Pocket.

Col. Room! Why what Room is this?

Afp. Even your own Sir, or the Devils.

Col. What do you mean, we are a great Way from Home.

Afp. Why then the Devil has carried the Room through the Air by Enchantment.

Col. You have a mind to make me loose my Senses—

Afp. Ay, poor Gentleman, t'other Bottle had done the Business—

Col. [feeling about] Ha! This is certainly the Door of my Room—Which way shou'd I come hither—Certainly we are under the Power of Enchantment—You Rascal, I'll teach you to be drunk when I am out of the Way—Why have not you a Light.

Afp. Why, really Sir, I took a Nap by the Fire-side, so at last I wak'd, Sir—And I saw I was in the Dark, Sir—But the People of the House are up, Sir—If you please I'll go and fetch a Candle—

Col. No Matter, stay here—I'll fetch one myself—

[Exit and locks the Door.]

Afp. O dear! What, has he lockt the Door—Gad my Heart akes—Either my Master is plaguy Drunk, and does not know what he says, or else the Devil has been very busie.

Enter Betty at the secret Door, leading in Sir Amorous.

Bet. Stay here till my Lady has put on her Night-cloaths, and then she'll come and conduct you to her Bed-Chamber—but be sure make no Noise.

Sir.

70 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Sir Amo. No, no; I'll be as still as a Lover hid in a Lady's Closet, when the least Noise wou'd alarm the Husband, and make his Horns visible.

Bet. Now for the Colonel!— [Feeling about lays hold of Aspin.
What are you asleep, Sir?—you are a dull Lover indeed—Come Colonel, my Lady has got rid of all her Company at last.

Afp. Ha! a Woman's Hand, and a moist one, that's no ill Sign—my Master has some damn'd Intrigue on Foot, which he durst not trust me with, she takes me for my Master: I'll e'en supply his Place, and that way let my self into the Secret.— [Aside.

Bet. Come away, Sir; but don't speak a Word for your Life.

Afp. No, no; I'll be silent as a Lawyer before he receives his Fee.

Sir Amo. Well it is a sufficient Consolation to me, for [Exeunt Asp. and Betty through the private Place. this Night's Sufferings, to think I have concluded 'em so fortunately, in the Marriage of so rich and beautiful a Woman.— [Col. Manly unlocks the Chamber-

Door, enters with a Candle, Sir Amo. seeing him, stands amazed in a Corner.

Col. Come ye drunken Sor, take the Candle and light me to Bed; and if ever you are guilty—hu—what gone—sure 'tis impossible. [Looks about, sees Sir Amo. Ha! What the Devil are you?

Sir Amo. Ha! Col. Manly, as I hope for Immortality I thought I had been—Why, where the Devil am I—

Col. In my Lodging, Sir, at present—but how you came here, I shou'd be very glad to know—

Sir Amo. Came here!—egad, I never was so confounded in my Life—Why I came in at the Door, I think.

Col. That's impossible; for I have had the Key in my Pocket—how my Man got out, or you came in, I can't imagine—But what the Devil do you do in this Disguise, have you been Masquerading.

Sir Amo. No, I have been Intriguing—

Col.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 71

Col. What like a Cat a top of the House, and so tumbled down the Chimney into my Lodging.

Sir Amo. Why 'faith, Colonel, that's what you may reasonably suppose by my Dress—

Enter Courtwell.

Court. Dear Colonel, I am glad you are come Home; wish me Joy, Joy, Joy, Man!

Col. You have always a great deal in your Looks; 'faith, *Charles*, 'tis impossible ever to read a Disappointment in thy Face; What! are you married?

Court. Not directly turn'd off, but as near it as a Man is being hang'd when the Sheriff cries, Drive away Carman; I am just going to leap into the conjugal Gulph.

Col. The Widow has consented at last, Sir.

Court. Consented! Ha, ha, ha, No 'faith she has not, nor knows nothing of the Matter; she's in Bed, and asleep too for ought that I know, and not so much as Dreams of a Husband. In short, Colonel, finding there was no hope of Success by a regular Siege; I have brib'd the Governour, who has promis'd to open the Gates, and let me in at Midnight.

Col. This is all mysterious, I can't possibly conceive what you mean by it.

Court. Mean, why I mean to get such a Generation of Boys and Girls, as shall put the weekly Bills out of Countenance, as *Sir Sampson* says: I have laid such a Design, that it were the Height of Folly to fear a Disappointment—Here's the magical Circle, and here's my Indentures for Life—[Sheav's a Ring and a License.] In short, before the Conclusion of this Night, I'll marry her in Spight of her Teeth, and go to Bed to her—with all her Heart.

Col. 'Faith *Charles*, thou'rt the most sanguine Fellow in thy hopes I ever knew.

Court. Come, Colonel, you must go along with me, and assist me in my Design; how now! what the Devil have you got here! a Baboon in a full-bottom Wig?

Col. Don't you know him! 'tis *Sir Amorous Vainwit*.

Court. *Sir Amorous!* Ha, ha, ha, how the Devil came you in this Pickle? What, forc'd to run up a Chimney

72 WOMAN is a RIDDEE.

Chimney to save your own Bones, and a Lady's Reputation.

Col. Sir *Amorous* and I have met with some odd Adventures to Night ; we have found our selves in this Room together, and neither of us can tell how we got here.

Court. No ! Prithee Sir *Amorous*, how came all this about ?

Sir *Am.* Why I'll tell you Mr. *Courtwell* as much of the Matter as I really can ; I was taken out of the Piazza in *Covent-Garden*, put in a Hackney-Chair, and carry'd —— faith I can't tell where —— but to a Rich Widows House who is passionately in Love with me, and to whom I was married within this Quarter of an Hour, and afterwards conducted into her Bed-chamber by the Maid, as the Girl told me : But the Colonel coming in with a Candle, I found (to my great Surprize as well as his) I was in his Lodging.

Col. This Adventure is in every Circumstance like mine, but the matrimonial Part ; I was taken out of the Piazza to Night; put into a Chair, carried a considerable Way, and at last set down in a strange House ; where I had not been long, before a beautiful young Lady came to me, with whom I had not discours'd five Minutes, but we were alarm'd by the unexpected approach of her Brother ; upon which the Lights were put out, and I was conducted in the Dark by the Maid into another Room, where I presently was surpriz'd by the Voice of my Man *Aspin*, who told me I was in my own Lodging, but which Way I came here, I am confounded to think ; my Man being Drunk, I went down to the Maid of the House for a Light ; lock'd *Aspin* in the Room ; but when I return'd with a Candle, my Man was vanish'd, and Sir *Amorous* left in his Place.

Court. Egad I'll lay my Life these are some of my Sister's Tricks—for all this must certainly be done by the Help of some private Door, and now I call it to mind, my Brother *Tom* (who is now at Sea) told me formerly of one which he had made through his own Chamber for the Conveniency of visiting a Gentleman's Wife who then liv'd in your House.

Col.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 73

Col. It must be so, then—but I can see no Appearance of one in the Wainscot.

Court. Perhaps it may be visible on the other Side one way: Stay here but two Minutes, I'll go into my Sister's Dressing-Room, which joins to this, and try if I can make any Discovery.

Sir. Amo. If he finds a Trap Door there, I may be in Hopes to come to a speedy Knowledge of my Wife.

Col. But Sir Amorous, was you really marry'd to Night?

Sir Amo. Or else may the Brilliant of my Countenance for ever labour under this fatal Eclipse.

Col. But how came you in this damn'd dirty Condition?

Sir Amo. The Narration wou'd be too prolix for the small Duration of this Opportunity; but when my Eyes are once more bless'd with the benign Prospect of my fair Bride, I'll tell you the whole Adventure.

Enter Courtwell thro' the private Door.

Court. Ha, ha, ha, the Riddle is expounded Colonel; now you know which way your invisible Mistress went—Come, come, make no Words, but let us go and surprize 'em their own Way—and then to the Widow, who now, Colonel, I dare tell you, lodges in the very House with my Sister.

[Exeunt thro' the private Door.]

SCENE changes to Miranda's Chamber.

Enter Miranda with a Candle.

Mir. So! Now this Marriage is over, I may have Leisure to talk to the Colonel—Poor Sir Amorous! I can't help laughing, to think how his Vanity will be mortify'd, when he finds who 'tis he has marry'd—Well, 'tis a Punishment due to his impudent Boasting—How, now, Betty, whom have you brought here?

Enter Betty leading in Aspin.

Bet. Bless me, Madam! I'm surpriz'd at the Blunder I have made—I swear—I took him in the Dark, for the Colonel!

Asp. And why not, Mrs. Combbrush?—Egad she's

WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

a clever Sort of a Woman—Ay, Master, Master, I've found you out faith—Egad, I'll e'en say something that's pretty to her my self—Madam, Madam!

Mir. How came you to bring this drunken Fellow here?

Afp. By mere Accident, I believe, Madam—But however, Madam, I hope in the whole you'll have no Reason to repent the Mistake, for you know, Madam, there's an old Proverb, which says, *Joan is as good as my Lady in the Dark*, according to that, why mayn't Roger be as good as his Master?

Mir. The Fellow is going to make Love to me, as I live!

Afp. Why, Madam, there is no Difference betwixt a Colonel and a Foot Soldier; and I have known a common Man do as good Service at a Breach as an Officer.

Enter Courtwell, Colonel Manly, and Sir

Amorous, out of the Closet.

Mir. Ha! bless me, which way came you all in my Closet?

Court. Oh! Don't be frighted Sister, we got there by the Help of a private Door, through which a certain young Lady has made many Excursions to play at Riddle-me-Riddle—But here are two Gentlemen, the one comes to make Enquiry after a Wife which he has got here, and the other after a Heart he has lately lost; I suppose you can give him Tidings of that.

Col. Were you the little Fairy, the lovely Shadow which haunted me—I am a Riddle, expound me and take me, that was your Promise, Madam, and here I stand to claim it.

Court. Come Sister, I read a kind of Compliance in your Looks, but I'll save your Blushes, by giving you to him by the Authority of a Brother—There, Colonel, take her, you are equally Mad, and fit for one another.

Sir Amo. Now the Mystery is open, and from my Mouth you may both hear your Disappointment—Know then, Sir, you have no Power to bellow so rich a Gift, nor you, Sir, to accept it, I being already married to this Lady; now, Colonel, notwithstanding my Vanity, and

and your prodigious Merit, you are convinc'd the Lady has had a quite different Opinion of us ; for it is my good Fortune, in Consideration to my superior Merit, to possess the Substance, while you, for your Vanity, like a disappointed Ixion, have only embrac'd a Shadow, and for your Ambition, are doom'd to the perpetual Wheel of Desision.

Court. What does your Ignorance mean ?

Sir Amo. What does your Wisdom think I mean ?

Court. How Sir, married to my Sister ?

Sir Amo. It is my good Fortune—I appeal to the Lady for a Confirmation.

Mir. Why really Sir *Amorous*, you have been a considerable while in the Dark, and 'tis high Time now to open your Eyes—Know then, Gentlemen, that Sir *Amorous* is not—married to me.

Sir Amo. Bless me, Madam ! what do you mean ! not marry'd !

Mir. Marry'd you are, but not to me, upon my Word :

Sir Amo. Why, Madam, pray recollect, was not I marry'd to you within this Quarter of an Hour ?

Mir. No, Sir—[Enter *Clarinda*.] But here is a Lady who was marry'd to you within this Quarter of an Hour—Look on her !—Lord, Sir, you are as Shy, as if she were an old Acquaintance.

Sir Amo. How, *Clarinda* ! the Devil, marry'd to her ! then I am the most miserable Dog the Sun ever shone upon.

Court. Prithee Sister solve this Riddle :

Sir Amo. Ay, dear Madam, do me the Favour to let me know how all this came about ?

Mir. Why then Sir, thus it was :—*Clarinda* was drinking a Dish of Tea with me this Afternoon, when my Brother came in, who was recommending you to me for an humble Servant, but she being too well acquainted with your Inconstancy, in Charity to me, and hoping some Redress of her Wrongs, inform'd me of your Treachery to her ; upon which, in Justice to my Sex, and to free my self from the Addresses of a Person I had no great Opinion of from the Report of my Ac-

76 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

quaintance, (for I never saw you before in my Life.) I was induc'd to send you that Amorous Epistle, which so soon brought you to my House, and the better to incline you to an immediate Marriage, I gave into your Hands sixteen Thousand Pounds in Bank Bills, which you know I oblig'd you to put in your Pocket-Book ; the Recovery of which, I had contriv'd in the Story of my Jealous Brother, who you may remember interrupted our Amorous Discourse, and occasion'd you to leave your Coat, with your Pocket-Book in it, to make your Escape in a Suit of my Cloaths, and a second Time to retire with Precipitation up the Chimney, which prepared the reasonable Excuse for your being marry'd in the Dark to this Lady instead of me; so you are both beholden to my Invention : She for Justice,—and you for a Wife.

Col. Pray Sir Amorous who do you think resembles Ixion now ?

Sir Am. I'll renounce Womankind, and proclaim War upon the whole Sex ! — And is your Fortune in the Indies, my Dear ?

Clar. I'd have you go see, my Dear.

Sir Am. And suppose I shou'd, my Dear ?

Clar. Then perhaps when you return, your Head may be better furnish'd.—

Sir Am. With Branches of your own planting, I don't doubt my Dear.

Clar. As soon as with more Wit, I dare say, my Dear.

[Enter Necessary] Whispers Courtwell.

Court. I come, — Gentlemen and Ladies, now I shall want your Assistance, I'd have you follow me as soon as possible, the Musick is all ready.—

Col. Sir Amorous, you must assist in the Design :

Sir Am. O pardon me ! what in this Dress !

Col. O there will be more Masqueraders; besides, you had better your self make a Jest of what has happen'd, and that way disappoint the ill-natur'd Town of doing it for you.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE changes to Lady Outside's Apartment.

Enter Col. Manly, Sir Amorous, Clarinda, Miranda, Betty, Singers and Dancers.

Mir.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 77

Mir. Play, play, play briskly Gentlemen, ——
this is her Bed-chamber; I'm resolv'd we'll have En-
trance. —— [Knocking.]

Enter Necessary.

Nec. Bless me, Madam! what's the Matter?

Mir. We are come to wish your Lady Joy, and
throw the Stocking.

Nec. Joy, Madam, of what? why my Lady's just
gone to Bed.

Mir. I'm sorry for that, I came on Purpose to un-
dress her.

Col. But, Madam, tho' you are come too late to per-
form that Ceremony, —— we'll go in and throw the
Stocking.

Mir. Ay, In, In, In, —— [Forcing in.]

Nec. Lord! Madam! what d'ye mean? You would
not have the Gentlemen go into my Lady's Chamber
now she's in Bed? [Exit and shuts the Door.]

Mir. Come, come, play again, Gentlemen, [Here
the Musick plays, and a Song.] [Knocking.] we come
to wish you Joy, Madam, and are resolv'd to see you
to Night in the Arms of your Bridegroom, therefore
you had as good open the Door, and let us come in.

Enter Lady Outside, as just risen from Bed, and Necessary.

L. Out. Dear *Miranda*! what do you mean by this
unseasonable Frolick? Your merry Temper, I vow,
carries you beyond the Rules of good Manners.

Mir. See what 'tis to have a Husband! what early
Hours it makes a Woman keep, a Bed before Eleven.

L. Out. A Husband, nay now you're Rude! What
d'ye mean?

Mir. Did you think to seal a Wedding? Come, come,
we're all come to wish you Joy, to have one Dance
with you, and then throw the Stocking —— Gentlemen,
this is my Sister.

Omn. We wish you Joy, Madam! ——

L. Out. *Miranda*, this is carrying the Jest too far, to
expose me thus before Strangers.

Mir. You know every Body but this Gentleman, and
he's my Brother's particular Friend, and I know for his
Sake, he's welcome —— Come, what does this Idle

78 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Bridegroom lie in Bed, and suffer his Bride to be thus long from his Arms ?

L. Out. Why sure you are distracted ! I marry'd ! how came you to dream of such a Thing ?

Mir. It signifies nothing to deny it, Madam, I know, and so does all this Company, that you were marry'd to my Brother this very Morning—Come, come, we'll go and fetch him out of Bed. [Running in.]

L. Out. Hold, *Miranda* ! I thought you had more Respect to the Decencies of our Sex, than to carry Gentlemen into my Bed-chamber.

Mir. Nay, Sister, you may shut the Door, but positively he shall get up, or we'll disturb the whole Neighbourhood.—Musick, play again, — [They play.] We'll raise the Devil, but we'll have him out of your Bed-chamber.

L. Out. I'm sure you must conjure, if you do.— [Enter Courtwell as from the Bed-chamber, in a Night-Gown, Night-Cap, and Slippers.] Ha ! — Oh ! Heaven ! which way got he there ?

Omn. Oh ! Mr. Courtwell, we wish you Joy, Joy, Joy.

Court. Gentlemen and Ladies, I'm oblig'd to you for your good Wishes, but this is a Compliment I must own I could well have spar'd, since it was the Desire of my fair Spouse to keep our Nuptials a Secret — Come, my Dear, don't be out of Humour, you find 'tis impossible to conceal our Marriage any longer, tho' upon my Soul, I can't imagine by what Means they came to know it.

L. Out. Know what, thou base impudent Wretch ? Art thou not ashamed.

Court. Not I, as I hope to be sav'd, Madam ; on the contrary, I think my self the happiest Man on Earth, in the Possession of so charming a Bride.

L. Out. This is a base Confederacy ; and you *Miranda*, I can never forgive, who I suppose are the main Instrument in this Design, to trick me into a Marriage with your audacious Brother.

Court. Come, come, prithee my Dear, disperse these unbecoming Frowns, I swear you carry the Jest too far now.

L. Out.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 79

L. Out. I never saw so much Assurance in my Life; but if it be possible to call a Blush into that impudent Face of thine, I'll do it.—Here Necessary, pray do you satisfy these Gentlemen and Ladies what you know of this Affair, and speak nothing but the Truth I charge you.

Nec. Nay, Madam, you need not give me that Cau-
tion, for I never told a Lye in my whole Life.

Court. Ay, Ay, do you hear, Necessary, tell the
Truth now your Lady has given you leave.

Nec. Then I must needs say—you have wedded and
bedded my Lady.

Court. Your Humble Servant, Madam—Strike up
Musick—Gentlemen and Ladies pray know my Wife.

L. Out. This is all a Piece of concerted Villainy to
ruin me, but tho' I am a Woman, I have Friends in the
World may call you to an Account for this barbarous
Imposition.

[Going up to her, she turns away from
him, and frowns in Contempt.

Court. Prithee my Dear, don't make your self so
very Ridiculous, upon my Soul, you'll make me blush
for your Folly; — come, come, this Humour is im-
pertinent, and I don't like it; — did you think I mar-
ry'd you to keep it a Secret from the World? — Know
your Duty Madam, and let me be obey'd.

L. Out. Was there ever such Insolence?

Court. Come, come, I say no more—Why what am
I ha?

L. Out. An impudent Villain.

Court. How!

L. Out. I have said it, Sir.

Court. Certainly the Woman is distracted!

L. Out. Or this will make me so. [Going up to her
and Smiling.

Court. An hast thou really the Assurance to deny be-
ing married to me then? Pray Madam will you be
pleas'd to tell the Company upon what Account you
and I have been in Bed together to Night.

L. Out. In Bed together! Oh! I shall burst with
Passion, base Man.

[Cries.
Court.

80 WOMAN is a RIDDLE.

Court. Lord! what obstinate Creatures these Women are, when they can't have their Will.

Col. I'm surpriz'd; Madam, you shou'd be such an Enemy to your own Reputation, as to persist in denying your Marriage, after what we have seen.

L. Out. Why, what have you seen, Sir.

Col. We have seen you, Madam, come out of your Chamber, at Eleven a Clock at Night, as risen from your Bed, and followed immediately by a lusty young Fellow, whom we reasonably suppose, by his Disabilie, and his own Confession, has been your companion there; so if you please, Madam, you may still deny your Marriage, and by that, give the censorious World a Reason to suspect your Vertues.

L. Out. What can I do in this Affair? — Sir, Mr. Courtwell, pray give me leave to speak a Word with you in private.

Court. Ay, my Dear, with all my Heart.

L. Out. Pray tell me, Sir; do you design to persist in this impudent Trick?

Court. Indeed I do Madam.

L. Out. And don't you think you have a great deal of Impudence?

Court. A Sort of modest Assurance, Madam, fit to carry me thro' such an Undertaking.

L. Out. Why you won't pretend to make me believe you have marry'd me, and been in Bed with me?

Court. No, Madam, you know better, I have only made my Friends believe that—Come Widow, I know you have no despicable Opinion of my Person, therefore if you wou'd preserve your Reputation, and avoid the Laughter of your Acquaintance, e'en come into my Design at once, and own a Marriage with me; I have a Licence in my Pocket, and a Parson by my Appointment in the Closet, it will be easy to make an Excuse for a Quarter of an Hour, while he does his Office, return to our Friends, have a Dance, and a Bottle, then to Bed, and bid fair for a Brace of Boys that shall inherit their Mother's Beauty—(L. Out.) and their Father's Modesty: (Court.) Right, Madam, and thus I seal the Agreement.

L. Out.

WOMAN is a RIDDLE. 81

L. Out. There's an irresistible Perswasion in his Lips,
and a World of Rhetorick in his Kisses; Don't you ex-
pect I shou'd use you Scurvily, if I shou'd consent to
marry you?

Court. No, my Dear; I'll do so well by thee, you
shall never have Reason to say you were marry'd for
your Sins.

L. Out. Well, Gentlemen and Ladies, I find 'tis in
vain to deny it any longer, I—am—what shall I say?

Court. I am marry'd— [Prompting her.]

L. Out. I am marry'd—I wou'd have conceal'd it
for some important Reasons I had, but now I freely own
I have dispos'd of my Person by a Lease for Life.

Court. And I'm the Man that shall inhabit the Tenement— [Kisses her.]

(Sings.) Her Lips are so balmy sweet,
Such Magick there is in a Kiss,
That when thus we kindly meet,
I long for the nameless Bliss.

Omn. We wish you Joy, Madam. [Salute her.]

Sir Amo. Madam, I wish you Joy too, and am sorry
I can't shew the Respect I ought: But you'll excuse my
Disabilie?

L. Out. Pray Sir Amorous what's your Meaning for
this Disguise?

Mir. He's doing Penance (tho' not in a white Sheet)
for some Crimes committed against our Sex, I'll take an
Opportunity to tell your Ladyship the whole Affair.

Court. Come, we'll make Use of the Entertainment
which our Friends have been so kind to provide for
us— You'll give me Leave my Dear to lead you up
in a Country-Dance. [They dance.] Come my fair
Spouse; for thy engaging Charms, I gladly quit the bar-
ren Pleasures of the Town, in the Fruition of thy
Love! I'll fix my future Happiness:

On Earth we find no Joys so lasting prove.
As the chaste Raptures of Connubial Love,

The End of the Fifth ACT.

THE WOMAN'S RIDDLE

EPilogue.

Spoken by Mrs. CROSS,

NOW, that we've done our best,
 [perhaps you'll say,
 There's nothing New in what
 [you've seen to Day.
 How should an impudent young
 [Pop miscarry,
 With a poor Soul that swore she ne'er would
 [marry?
 For by your wicked Rules, you take for good,
 Widows should be like Almanacks understood:
 You read 'em backwards, like a Witches Pray-
 er,
 You fear they'll jilt you, if they speak you fair:
 And, without casting Figures, high or low,
 You comprehend them when they answer, No.

In our Sex, these Arts are nothing new,
 They're old Examples which we took from you.
 You first began the War of Oaths and Lies,
 And always kept it on with good Supplies:
 But these you have forsaken some Time since,
 For that more powerful Virtue, Impudence:

EPILOGUE.

83.

*A Thing of such infallible Success,
It prospers only by its Emptyness :
You call it Courage, when 'tis dress'd in Red,
But yet it seldom dies in Honour's Bed :
It changes at the Bar to Eloquence,
Tho' ignorant of Law, and void of Sense.
'Tis Wit, 'tis Beauty, and 'tis manly Grace,
It mightily sets off a hideous ugly Face :
A prosperous Folly, that without Pretence,
Still Lords it over Breeding, Wit and Sense.
When arm'd with this Temptation you assail us,
O Cupid ! what will all our Arts avail us !
In vain our Affectations we apply,
Whilst you the Force of strong Assurance try.*

F I N I S.



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